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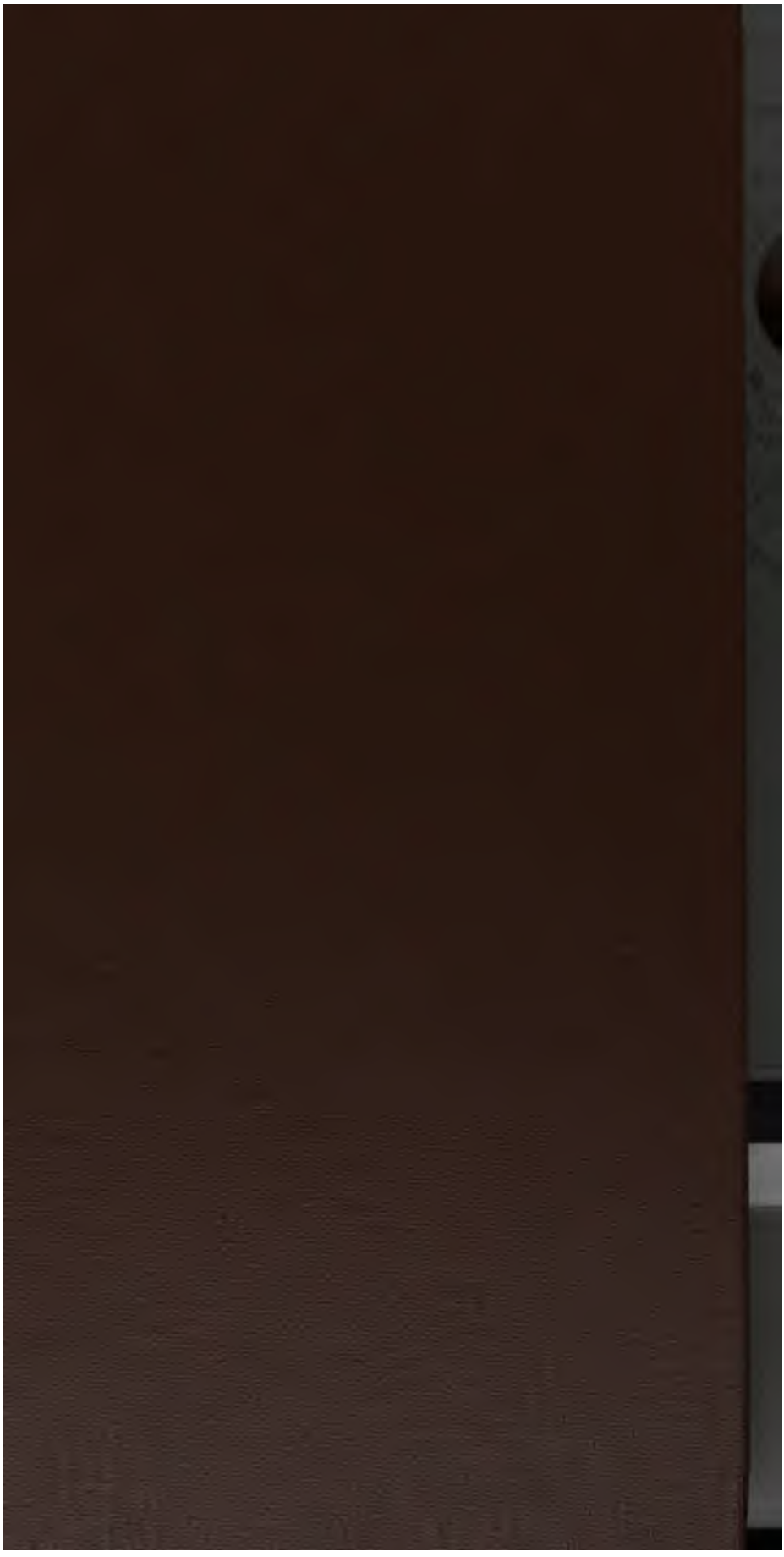

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JOSEPH BELLAMY, D. D.

FIRST PASTOR OF

THE CHURCH IN BETHLEM, CONN.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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FOUR SERMONS

ON THE

WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY. *Luke* ii. 10.

LIGHT IS SOWN FOR THE RIGHTEOUS, AND GLADNESS FOR THE UPRIGHT IN HEART. *Psalm* xcvii. 11.

THERE WAS A THICK DARKNESS IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT; BUT ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAD LIGHT IN THEIR DWELLINGS. *Exodus* x. 22, 23.

PREFACE.

GREAT offence hath been taken at the answer the Assembly of Divines have given to this question, What are the decrees of God? *Answer.* The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Often hath it been said, "If God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, then he foreordained sin." As though it were evidently the greatest absurdity in nature, to suppose that God really thought it best, on the whole, that sin ever should exist in the world he had made. And I suppose it is generally taken for granted that it had been much better, if sin and misery had been forever unknown; and looked upon as one of the most unaccountable things, that God ever suffered affairs in this world to take such a course as they have. I do not imagine mankind would ever have thought of disputing God's right to lay out a universal plan, had the plan appeared to them wise and good. We do not dispute our superior's right, in time of war, to lay out a plan of operation for an ensuing campaign, although it is expected it will cost many a precious life, when, on the whole, we think the plan is wise and good. But while mankind take for granted that the present universal plan is unwise and bad, all things going wrong, they can by no means believe that from eternal ages it was contrived by infinite wisdom and goodness; but are under a necessity to suppose that they have taken a different course from what God intended, and turned out contrary to his original design and expectation; and that he is

really disappointed and grieved. And doubtless, if God is disappointed and grieved, all the inhabitants of heaven are very sorry too; so that the grief and sorrow is universal in the world above. And if it is universal there, it may well be universal here. And this disappointment, grief, and sorrow, is likely to be eternal, as the wicked, according to Scripture, must be eternally miserable. And thus, it seems, hell will be full of the groans of the damned, forever lost and undone; and heaven full of disappointment and grief, God and all holy beings heartily sorry that things have come to such an issue. And where will be the triumph and joy? If God is disappointed and grieved, and angels and saints in heaven are grieved, and poor sinners forever lost, there seems to be nothing but grief in the whole system; not one being perfectly suited, unless that very worst of all beings, who is called the old serpent, the devil; who yet is the very one that, above all, was finally to be disappointed, according to the ancient oracle, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

A chief design of the following sermons is to rectify these mistaken notions and apprehensions; not by proposing mere theories, but by turning the reader to a certain light, which shines in this dark and benighted world, the only sure guide we poor mortals have, and to which we do well to give heed. I mean, the Holy Scriptures; but for which, I think, we might have groped in total darkness, as to this particular, unable ever to have extricated ourselves.

It was necessary that the true character of Jesus Christ should be determined, in order to open the wisdom of God's universal plan to view. This, therefore, is attempted in the first sermon. And it was equally necessary that the final success of Christ's undertaking should be brought into view, to rectify some mistakes as to matters of fact; and this is attempted in the next. And the reader may see the method I have taken to give light to the main subject, by a careful perusal of the following sermons on the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.

And these sermons are the rather published at this season, when the state of the world and of the church appears so exceeding gloomy and dark, and still darker times are by many expected, as they are calculated to give consolation to such as fear the Lord, and are disposed to hearken to his holy word. A firm belief of the supreme Godhead of our Savior, who now sits at the head of the universe, conducting all things, and whose love to his church is as fervent as it was when he hung on the cross; and a realizing sense of that glorious day's approaching, when "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters do the sea;" together with an insight into the nature and wisdom of God's universal government, may afford abundant support, let the present storm rise ever so high, and the times grow ever so dark.

JOSEPH BELLAMY.

BETHLEM, *March* 21, 1758.

THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON I.

YE THOUGHT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT UNTO GOOD.
Genesis l. 20.

JACOB being dead and buried, and Joseph still governor over all the land of Egypt, his guilty brethren began to be afraid that Joseph, in whose power they now were, and at whose mercy they now lay, would requite them evil for the inhuman, barbarous deed they had formerly committed, in selling him for a slave, notwithstanding all his cries and tears, and the anguish of his soul. Wherefore, having first sent messengers to him, to pacify him, and beg his pardon, they venture at last into his presence, and fall down before his face, and resign to his mercy, saying, "Behold, we be thy servants," that is, we have nothing to say for ourselves; we are verily guilty; we are in thy power; we surrender ourselves to thy disposal. Upon which Joseph said unto them, "Fear not" any harm from me; "for am I in the place of God?" the righteous Judge of the world, to whom vengeance belongs, and with whom you had need make your peace. It is true, indeed, you acted a barbarous and cruel part: "Ye thought evil against me; but God," who had the ordering of the whole affair, "meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." And while I behold the wisdom and goodness of God, so conspicuous in this dispensation, I have no disposition to revenge the injury you did me. "Therefore, fear not;" for, instead of requiting you the evil you are sensible you deserve, for your ill treatment of me, I will rather, in imitation of God, who hath been so kind to me in all my distresses, treat you with all goodness: "I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly to them."

At the same time Joseph viewed the conduct of his brethren, and considered their temper and designs, and the heinousness of their crime, he also beheld the hand of God, which he as plainly saw in the whole affair, permitting and overruling his brethren's sin, to answer good and noble ends. And this indisposed him to any angry resentments, and framed his soul only to gratitude to God, and love and kindness to his brethren. His seeing the hand of God in it, or, to use his own language, his seeing that "God meant" he should be sold, and that it was "God who sent him thither," together with the happy experience he had of the wisdom and goodness of God in the affair, not only prepared him to forgive his brethren, but to treat them with all possible tenderness and fraternal goodness. So that he was not only satisfied in the wisdom of God in the permission of that sin, but was thereby better prepared to do his duty.

Doctrine. — A sight of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, is very useful to promote holiness of heart and life. It has a great tendency to make us feel right and behave well.

Thus it was with Joseph, as we have seen. And thus it was with Job, who, while the Sabeans wickedly robbed him, eyed the hand of God, and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." And thus it was with David, while Shimei wickedly abused him, going along on the hill over against him, as he was fleeing out of Jerusalem, from the hands of Absalom, his son, and cursed him as he went, saying, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man." "Let him curse," says David, "for the Lord hath bidden him." "I justly deserve it at the hands of the majesty of heaven, against whom I have grievously sinned. A bloody man indeed I am. O Uriah! Uriah! I shall never forget the blood of the valiant Uriah!"

But it is needless to multiply instances. For nothing is plainer than that it must tend to bring us to a right temper of mind, in every circumstance of life, to view infinite wisdom as ordering all things which concern us in the wisest and best manner. Nor could any thought be more shocking to a pious mind, than to conceive the Deity as unconcerned in human affairs; the devil ruling in the children of disobedience without control; and all things jumbling along in this wicked world, without the least prospect of any good end ever to be answered. But if all things, good and bad, are under the government of infinite wisdom, this affords a sure prospect of a happy issue. And under such a wise and perfect government, we have the greatest inducement to go on cheerfully in the ways of our duty; having always an implicit faith in the Supreme Ruler of the

universe. Wherefore, the truth of the doctrine being thus plain and evident, I shall only attempt to show, —

I. What we are to understand by God's permitting sin.

II. The wisdom of God in the permission of sin.

III. Conclude with a practical improvement.

I. What are we to understand by God's permitting sin?

1. Not that he loves sin, or that there is any thing in the nature of sin that he approves of; for it is the abominable thing which his soul hateth. When he viewed the temper, conduct, and design of Joseph's brethren, they each of them appeared perfectly odious in his eyes. Their envy and malice he abhorred; their cruel and barbarous deed he detested; their design intimated in that saying, "And then shall we see what will become of his dreams," he perfectly disapproved.

2. Much less are we to imagine that God, in permitting sin, deprives the sinner of the freedom of his will. Joseph's brethren felt themselves at liberty; and in the whole affair, acted according to their own inclinations, just as they pleased.

3. God's permitting sin consists merely in not hindering of it. He saw that Joseph's brethren, considering their temper, and how they had their brother out in the field, and how that the Ishmaelitish merchants would soon come by, etc., would certainly sell him, unless he interposed to hinder it. And he could have hindered their selling as easily as he hindered their murdering him. But he did not. He let them take their course.

4. And yet it is self-evident, God never permits sin in the character of an unconcerned spectator, as not caring how affairs go; but as having weighed all circumstances and consequences. Therefore,

5. God never permits sin, but only when, all things considered, he judges it best not to hinder it. And therefore,

6. At whatever time God forbears to interpose to hinder the commission of any act of sin, he is not only justifiable in his conduct, but even commendable and praiseworthy; because he has chosen to act in the wisest and best manner. But this leads me,

II. To show the wisdom of God in the permission of sin. And I will, in the first place, begin with some instances that are more plain and easy, and afterwards proceed to what is more intricate and difficult.

1st instance. And to begin with the affair of Joseph, there needs little to be said, to show the manifold wisdom of God in it; for it does not appear that God could, as things were cir-

cumstanced, have taken a better method for the advancement of Joseph to be governor over all the land of Egypt than this. It was a method suited to humble Joseph, and wean him from the world, and bring him to an entire resignation to God, and dependence upon, and devotedness to him; and to prepare him for so high a station, that in it he might conduct with all fidelity to Pharaoh, and with humility, goodness, and condescension to all around him; to the honor of the God of Israel, and to the reputation of true religion, in the midst of a people sinking down fast into idolatry and wickedness. It was a method suited to give him a high character in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all Egypt; as one dear to the great God, full of wisdom and benevolence, and the fittest man in Egypt to be so highly advanced and so far betrusted. From a poor prisoner, he rose soon to so high a character, and was so highly esteemed, as to become a father to Pharaoh, and to all Egypt.

Nor does it appear that, as things were circumstanced, God could have taken a better method than this to provide for the sustenance of Jacob's family, of the Egyptians, and of the nations throughout the land of Canaan, through a famine of seven years' continuance. It was a method suited to dispose Pharaoh and all Egypt to receive Jacob's family kindly, and give them a hearty welcome; as they were the kindred of Joseph, their great benefactor. It was a method suited to humble Joseph's brethren, and not only to bring them to repentance for their sin, but to a better temper in general. And as the selling of Joseph had been matter of severe trial to Jacob, who verily thought him dead, and expected to go down to the grave sorrowing; so, in the issue, the whole was suited abundantly to establish him in the belief of the being and perfections of God, and of his government of the world; and to give him an affecting, ravishing sense of the holiness, wisdom, goodness, power, and faithfulness of the God of Abraham, his father; and to confirm him in the expectation of the accomplishment of all God's promises. And, in the mean time, the Egyptians, and all the nations inhabiting the land of Canaan, were provided for with food through a long and sore famine, in a manner suited to convince them of the vanity of their idols, and to bring them to a high esteem of the God of the Hebrews, to whose kind interposition their whole support was owing.

And thus God left not himself without witness, in that dark and benighted age of the world, when all the nations were sinking fast down into idolatry. For the whole affair of the selling of Joseph; of the conduct of his mistress; of his

unshaken virtue; of his imprisonment; of his interpreting the dreams of his fellow-prisoners; of his being brought to Pharaoh's court and interpreting his dreams: of his advancement, and of all his conduct in that high station, would naturally be noised abroad, not only throughout all Egypt, but also through all the land of Canaan, from whence they daily came into Egypt for bread; yea, the news of these things would be apt to fly far and wide among all the nations round about, to the glory of the true God, and to the honor of the true religion, and to the condemnation of an idolatrous world, who had forsaken the Lord Jehovah, and gone after idols, that could neither see, nor hear, nor help. All which good ends, and many more, God had in view. Wherefore, although Joseph's brethren acted a very wicked, cruel, God-provoking part, in selling their brother, notwithstanding all his cries and tears, and the anguish of his soul, with an envious, malicious, and impious intention to prevent the accomplishment of his divine dreams, scoffingly saying among themselves, "And then we shall see what will become of his dreams;" yet, at the same time, the God of Abraham acted truly like himself, a noble, a God-like part, in letting them take their course, with a design to overrule it, as he did to accomplish his dreams; and that in a way so much to his own glory, and so much to the general good. And how know we but that the infinitely wise Governor of the universe, when he permitted angels and man to fall, and things in the intelligent system to take such a course as they have, designed to overrule the whole so, according to a plan he had then in view, as that, in the issue, God should be more exalted, and the system more holy and happy than if sin and misery had never entered?

2d. But I proceed to a second instance of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin. Some time after Joseph's death, when the children of Israel were greatly multiplied, there arose another king in Egypt, who knew not Joseph, nor paid the least regard to his memory; who, to enrich himself, attempted to bring the Israelites into a perpetual bondage; and to that end set task-masters over them, who made them serve with rigor. And, observing how exceedingly they multiplied, lest they should become too numerous and potent, and get themselves up out of a land in which they were so abused, Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill their male children. But the midwives proving unfaithful to his injunctions, he laid his commands on all his people in general, to take every male child and cast it into the river. (Ex. i.) All which was inhuman and barbarous to the last degree.

As God had provided for the kind entertainment of the Israelites, by the means of Joseph, whom he sent before them, so he could have provided for the continuation of their tranquillity, and restrained Pharaoh from this tyrannical conduct. But he chose to bring all these distresses upon them, to wean them from the idols and pleasures of Egypt; to make them mindful of the promised land, and to prepare them for their approaching deliverance, and for their wilderness travels. Therefore he wisely let Pharaoh take his course. For the Israelites were so kindly received in Joseph's day, and so generously provided for, that they began after a while to forget the land of Canaan, and feel themselves at home, and fall in love with the customs and idolatries of Egypt. And had it not been that Pharaoh attempted their slavery, and treated them with so great severity, there would have been danger of their forgetting the God of their fathers totally, and incorporating at length with the Egyptians; so that they greatly needed these distresses to make them willing to leave Egypt, and discern the goodness of God in their deliverance, and to awaken them and their posterity, in ages then to come, to a sense of their great obligations to God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.

Besides, at the same time that God, by the cruel tyranny of Pharaoh, was preparing the Israelites for their deliverance, he also overruled his barbarity to give an occasion of raising them up a deliverer. For Pharaoh having ordered all the male children to be cast into the river, Moses' mother, after having concealed him three months, durst keep him no longer, and so left him in an ark of bulrushes, at the side of the river, to the mercy of the cruel Egyptians. Here Pharaoh's daughter finds him; is touched with compassion; and relieves the poor weeping infant. And now Moses is called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter," and is educated in Pharaoh's court, and instructed in all the learning of Egypt; and finally, completely furnished for the glorious work designed him. For, Pharaoh seeking Moses' life, he was obliged to flee to the land of Midian; where, in the solitary life of a shepherd, he spent forty years, until he became the meekest man on earth. And being thus endowed with an extraordinary measure of human learning and of divine grace, God sends him to deliver his people, who had been groaning under their sore bondage above one hundred years. "O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

The very methods which Pharaoh, in his great policy, takes to bind down the Hebrews in perpetual slavery, God overrules, to prepare them for, and to bring out their deliverance. And

while Pharaoh is hurried on in his schemes by his insatiable avarice, and indulges in barbarous cruelty, God, the infinitely wise Superintendent, calmly looks on, and lets him take his course, conscious of his own almightiness, and having his own glorious plan all before him. And how know we but that this same infinitely wise being, who has had the government of the universe in his hands from the beginning, had some noble, God-like design in view, when he first permitted sin and misery to enter into the world which he had made?

3d. But I proceed to a third instance of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.

Pharaoh, full of a sense of his own greatness and power, and of the advantages which would accrue to him from the labors of so many servants, no sooner perceived Moses' design, but he firmly resolved never to let Israel go. And when Moses assured him that the God of the Hebrews had appeared to him, he bade defiance, not only to Moses, but to his God. "I know not the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." And the more Moses insisted upon their release, the more his pride and covetousness wrought. For his honor's sake he scorned to yield; and for his interest's sake he many a time resolved he never would; for the supreme Monarch of the universe, who does according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, had looked on the bold, the daring, the haughty wretch, and determined to leave him to his own heart, to take his own way, and do as he pleased; foreseeing just how he would conduct, and how the affair would finally issue.

Go, says God to Moses, go unto Pharaoh, and say, "Thus saith the Lord, Let Israel go, that they may serve me. But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go; no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof. And Pharaoh shall know that I am the Lord; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. Yea, my name shall be declared throughout all the earth. And thus do I order the affair, that thou also mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs that I have done amongst them, that ye may know that I am the Lord."

Moses goes and delivers his message to Pharaoh, saying, "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me." "Be gone to your burdens," says Pharaoh to the Israelites. "And you, Moses, do you hinder the people no longer from their labor. And you, task-masters, give them no straw; for they are idle and wanton, and full of

notions; but I will tame these Hebrews, and make them know they had better have been content where they were." So the task-masters with rigor drive on the Israelites to perform their impossible tasks, and beat them for non-performance. They cry to Pharaoh, but cry in vain. "Ye are idle, ye are idle," says he, "and full of notions. Be gone! No mercy shall be shown you. I will make you repent your new scheme before I have done with you." Thus Pharaoh storms, drives, sets up himself, hardens his heart, resolved they shall never go.

Whereupon the God of Israel "wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan. He turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink: he sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them: he gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust: he devoured their vines with hail, and their sycamore-trees with frost: he gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts: he cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them: he made a way to his anger: he spared not their souls from death; but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength, in the tabernacles of Ham. But made his own people to go forth like sheep: he led them on safely; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies."

Pharaoh's design was, if possible, to prevent the egress of the Hebrews, that he might keep them for his slaves; and that they and all the world might know, that he was too potent and mighty a prince to be subdued and conquered by the God of the Hebrews, to whom, from the beginning, he had bid defiance.

God's designs were, by severe and cruel bondage, to wean the Israelites from Egypt; or, at least, to force them, weaned or not, to leave the country and be gone. Therefore he let Pharaoh loose, so unmercifully to oppress them. And as for Pharaoh, God let him lift up himself, harden his heart, be as stout and haughty as he pleased; that, as he was desirous, so he might have full opportunity to try his strength with the God of the Hebrews; that, in the issue, he might know, and the Egyptians might know, to their shame and confusion, that he was the Lord, the only true and living God, infinitely superior to all their idols. And, in the mean time, he designed to give a lively picture of himself, as of one infinitely too wise, great, and powerful, for feeble mortals to contend with; resolved to vindicate his own honor at all events, and revenge

affronts offered his majesty, and carry on his own designs in spite of all opposition, that the Israelites might see it, and know it for their good; that all the inhabitants of Canaan might be struck into a panic; and, indeed, that his name might be declared throughout all the earth. For he intended that these his mighty works should never be forgotten among men, so long as the sun and moon should endure.

Methinks I behold Moses, on the other side of the Red Sea, standing safe on the shore, while the carcasses of the Egyptians, their broken chariots, their drowned horses, part sunk to the bottom, and part floating upon the sea, and scattered along the coasts. There he stands; he looks back, he surveys the gracious, the dreadful, the glorious works of the God of Abraham, from the day he saw the burning bush in the wilderness of Horeb, and received his commission to act in this grand affair. Pharaoh's haughty temper, his impious, covetous, tyrannical, deceitful conduct, all rise clear to his view. The astonishing works of the God of Israel, his righteous vengeance on his foes, his self-moving goodness and sovereign grace to the Israelites, torn away from their idols, and delivered out of the house of bondage, all fill his astonished soul; and the powerful impressions penetrate the centre of his heart. He looks forward, too, to the promised Canaan, to which the Almighty had now undertaken to lead them, and imagines what terror the news of all these things would spread through all the land. Inspired with these views, ravished with the glory of the God of Israel, charmed with the majesty and beauty of the divine conduct, he spake, saying, —

"I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. He is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my fathers' God, and I will exalt him. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee. Thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou, in thy mercy, hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. The people shall hear and be afraid. Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them. By the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O

Lord, till the people pass over which thou hast purchased. The Lord shall reign forever and ever."

And while Moses thus sang the praises of God, the supreme Monarch of the universe, and celebrated his glorious triumph over Pharaoh and all his idol gods; so ravished with the wisdom, glory, and beauty of the divine conduct, as to be even more attached to his honor and interest than ever, and even the better prepared to conduct with that steady fidelity through all the future trials of his life, always true to God, and heartily concerned to see the honor of his great name secured; I say, while Moses was full of these divine views and tempers on this grand occasion, all Egypt were in profound darkness; and these dispensations, so bright and glorious in the view of Moses, to them appeared gloomy as death.

And if these dispensations of divine providence, which to the Egyptians appeared so dark and gloomy, to Moses appeared so full of divine wisdom, beauty, and glory, how know we but that God's whole plan of government, how dark soever it may now appear to a revolted world, under God's displeasure, may, to saints and angels, after the general judgment, appear perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty, and be matter of their eternal delight and praise?

4th. But I proceed, fourthly, to other instances of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.

The Israelites, having thus escaped the hands of Pharaoh, and recovered their liberty, had it been left to them to direct their march, and point out their future fortunes, they might perhaps have thought it best, that, being led on directly to the land of Canaan, they should, by the mighty power of God, have been put into an immediate possession, to be followed with scenes of feasting, joy, and mirth, never to be interrupted.

But God, who knew their hearts, who knew how deeply tainted they were with the idolatries and manners of Egypt, and how high a relish they had for sensual pleasures, might easily foresee how all sense of the true God would soon be lost in the midst of such prosperity, and they become no better than the ejected Canaanites. Besides, he saw that in almost every other respect, they were as yet unprepared to enter the promised land; and also he designed them for our ensamples, and his dispensations towards them for the instruction of mankind to the end of the world. Wherefore, let us attend to the divine conduct, and behold the manifold wisdom of God.

He had torn them away from their idols, their leeks, their onions, and their flesh-pots, to which they were stupidly attached. He had sent to them, by Moses, and commanded, that

they should cast away every man the abominations of his eyes, and not defile themselves with the idols of Egypt any more; for that he himself was the Lord their God. But although the thunder of divine wrath so dreadfully roared throughout all the land of Egypt among the Egyptians, and God was now, in a miraculous manner, working their deliverance, yet, even now, they rebelled against the Lord, and would not hearken unto him. "They did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt." Wherefore God said, "I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger upon them, in the midst of the land of Egypt." * But then God considered what the Egyptians would say to such a dispensation of providence, and how it would be misinterpreted through all nations and ages. Wherefore he wrought for his great name's sake, that it might not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, and in whose sight God intended to make himself known to the Israelites by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. (Ezek. xx. 5—9.) And therefore, instead of the destruction they deserved from his hands, for their stupid attachment to Egyptian abominations, God let loose Pharaoh to increase their burdens, to make their bondage absolutely intolerable, that he might force them from their idols, and drive them out of Egypt. And to bring them still more to their senses, God let Pharaoh loose to pursue them with chariots, and horsemen, and a great army; and contrived that he should overtake them, shut in among the mountains, unable to make their escape; that he might have opportunity to let Israel see his mighty power, in dividing the sea, and make them feel their dependence upon and obligations to him; and that, having led them through the sea, he might have them in a barren wilderness, where there was neither bread, nor flesh, nor water, as the fittest scene for those transactions, and

* If, when God met with such infinite provocations at the hands of the Hebrews, he could yet find in his heart to prosecute his design, and accomplish his promise to Abraham, that to his seed he would give the land of Canaan, we cannot have the least reason to doubt but that, notwithstanding all the present wickedness of his professing people in the world, whereby he is infinitely provoked to resign all Christendom to destruction, he will yet prosecute his designs and accomplish all his promises, — "give to his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; and bring every people, nation, language, and tongue, to serve him; and Satan shall be bound, and Christ shall reign on earth for a thousand years." — No obstacles, no discouragements, no provocations, no difficulties, of whatever kind, or however great, can hinder God from the accomplishment of the glorious designs of his grace. He redeemed Israel out of Egypt, although he saw what they were then and what they would be in all future times. Yea, he has given his Son, and that to the death of the cross, in order to carry on his designs. And what will not God Almighty then do? Almightiness, so infinitely engaged, cannot and will not be frustrated.

grand events, belonging to the infinitely wise plan which God had laid out.

Israel had been in Egypt two hundred and fifteen years;* and the latter part of the time, for above a hundred years, in a state of bondage and slavery. They had almost forgotten the true God, and the true religion; were habituated to the idolatry and manners of Egypt; well pleased with the country; and, but for their oppressions, would never have entertained any thoughts of leaving it. Yea, notwithstanding their severe bondage, were hardly prevailed upon to hearken to Moses, to whom they said, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians," as they afterwards upbraided him in their distress at the Red Sea. (Ex. xiv. 12.) And they were of so mean and dastardly a spirit, as to be unfit to march against their enemies. God, who knew their temper, judged that if he had led them from Egypt straight to Canaan, which was not a hundred miles distant, the approach of their enemies, prepared for war, would have frightened them back again to Egypt. (Ex. xiii. 17.) Yea, such was their attachment to Egypt, their coldness to Canaan, their cowardice, and their stupid infidelity, even after a year's discipline in the wilderness, and notwithstanding their solemn profession and promises to God at Mount Sinai, that, upon the ill tidings of the spies, they were for stoning Caleb and Joshua, and making to themselves a captain, and returning to their beloved Egypt.

Now, such were the people God had to manage, so every way distempered, that they needed all their old notions, tastes, and tempers, to be eradicated; and to have their minds wholly framed anew, in order to be fit inhabitants for the holy land.

They must be thoroughly weaned from Egypt; from their idolatry and their manners; and be brought to know the true God, and to be sensible of his infinite abhorrence of their tempers and ways, and have their hearts effectually broken under a sense of their vileness, that they might loathe themselves, and

* From the covenant with Abraham to the giving of the law was (as St. Paul asserts, Gal. iii. 17) four hundred and thirty years. And this will give light to Gen. xv. 13, and to Exod. xii. 40, 41. For the law was given soon after they came out of Egypt.

Joseph was seventeen years old when he was sold, and it is supposed he was soon imprisoned, perhaps the very same year, and so that he lay in prison about thirteen years; for he was thirty at his advancement. After which, in about nine years, Jacob and all his family came down into Egypt. After which Joseph lived seventy-one years. And so, in all, was in the greatest honor eighty years, to counterbalance thirteen years of sorrow. Israel came out of Egypt one hundred and forty-four years after Joseph's death; the greatest part of which time they were under oppression. Moses was born sixty-four years after Joseph's death; spent forty in Pharaoh's court, and forty in the land of Midian.

turn to the Lord, and love him, and be prepared to understand and fall in with the religion he gave them from Mount Sinai, that they might be a holy people to the Lord, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation; that they might be to his praise and glory, in the midst of an idolatrous, benighted world; and that they might receive the promised land, not as a reward of their righteousness; for they were a stiff-necked people; but as a mere free gift from the God of Abraham, their father; and feel themselves, by the means, laid under the strongest obligations to love him, and fear him, and walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands: and at the same time, be so inured to hardship, and so thoroughly confirmed in the belief of the being and perfections of God, as that, in an entire dependence on the Lord, they might march into the promised land, and behave like valiant soldiers, and execute God's vengeance on those idolatrous nations whom he had doomed to destruction, break down their altars, cut down their groves, burn their gods, and extirpate both them and their religion from off the face of the earth.

And what method, better suited to answer these noble ends, could possibly have been devised, than that which the Lord their God took for the space of forty years in the wilderness? wherein he humbled them, and proved them, and tried them, that it might appear what was in their hearts; and he left them to hunger and to thirst, and to murmur and rebel, and to commit idolatry, that their hearts might be turned inside out before their eyes; and, by a long course of discipline, he trained them up to a sense of his being, and perfections, and government, and to feel their dependence on him, and obligations to him, and by experience learn the dreadful nature of sin. He fed them with angels' food, and gave them water out of the flinty rock; he led them by day in a cloud, and in the night by a pillar of fire; but when they rebelled, the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed up hundreds, and the plague swept away thousands at a stroke; yea, at last, the whole congregation of six hundred thousand were doomed to fall in the wilderness.

Nothing impresses the heart of a human creature like facts. Nor could any series of facts have been better contrived than these to reach their hearts, and make them feel what they were in the sight of infinite holiness, and to bring them to fear the glorious and fearful name of the Lord their God.

At the side of the Red Sea they were, to appearance, full of love to God, and there they sang his praise; and had things gone to their minds, they might never have suspected the secret hypocrisy of their hearts. But, as God had contrived the

plan, in three days their religious affections were gone, and their corrupt hearts, like the troubled sea, cast up mire and dirt. God knew what they were before, and it was wise in him to take this method to bring them to know it too.

At Mount Sinai they were again deeply affected, when the law was given in a manner so solemn and divine; and there they promised, that whatsoever the Lord their God should command them, that would they do. But in less than forty days they made them a calf after the manner of Egypt, and ate and drank, and rose up to play, after the Egyptian mode. God knew before that all this was in their hearts; and now he wisely permitted it to break out, that they might know it too, and that he might have a good opportunity to let them see how exceedingly he hated their ways. He had tried words, but these would not do. He had used the plainest and strongest expressions in the first and second commandments, but they were not effectual. Now, he proceeds to facts. Three thousand are slain by the sword at his command, to let the whole congregation know how detestable their conduct was in his eyes. (Ex. xxxii. 28.)

And so, again, while the tabernacle was building, and at the time of its dedication, they appeared very forward in religion, as though they loved God, and loved his worship, and were determined for the future to be an obedient people. And this lasted for about a year. And doubtless they thought themselves sincere, and always might have thought so, had no new trials come on. But no sooner did the spies return from viewing the land of Canaan, and bring ill tidings, but their old Egyptian temper all revived. Now Joshua and Caleb must be stoned for pleading the Lord's cause, and a new captain chosen to conduct them back to Egypt, which they left with reluctance about a year ago; willing, it seems, forever to part with their God, their tabernacle, and their religion; and turn back to the idols, and manners, and leeks, and onions of Egypt; and make their peace with the Egyptians as they could. And had not the Almighty suddenly interposed, no doubt dreadful deeds would soon have been done. God knew all this was in their hearts before; and now he wisely permitted it to break out, that they might know it too, and that, by his future conduct toward that people, he might let them know that he was the Lord, and fill the whole earth with his glory. (Num. xiv.)

And while that generation was doomed to wander forty years in the wilderness, and their carcasses there to fall, as the just punishment of their crimes, their posterity, by the means, had their Egyptian notions and tempers eradicated, and were trained

up in the knowledge of God, and of the true religion; and prepared to enter, conquer, and possess, the holy land. Nor could they ever, to their dying day, forget the works of the Lord their God, which they had seen in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, etc. Nor could they have had stronger inducements to tell these things to their sons, and sons' sons. Nor could a better method have been taken to lay a lasting foundation for a firm belief and steady practice of the true religion.

It was most for the honor of God, and most for the interest of religion, and so really for the best good of the Israelites, that they should be thus tried; left to act out their hearts, and then punished, subdued, humbled, and brought into subjection to the divine authority, before they entered into possession of the promised land, although it cost them six hundred thousand lives, and many a dreadful day. For to what purpose had it been for God to have brought them straight from Egypt, with all their Egyptian notions and tempers, into the holy land, there to have polluted it, and to have dishonored him with their abominations? *

Besides, from the murmurings and rebellions of the Israelites in the wilderness, there was the fullest demonstration of the divinity of the Jewish religion. For, had not Moses been sent of God, and supported, too, by the interposition of almighty power, it had been impossible he should have accomplished the design. They would surely have deserted him, and returned to Egypt again. Nor could the children of Israel, how degenerate soever they were, and how apt soever to fall into idolatry in after ages, ever once scruple whether Moses were indeed sent of God, after such a scene of wonders for forty years together. Nor does it appear that the divine legation of Moses was ever called in question by that people.

And whenever they read over the law of Moses, together with the history interspersed in those sacred books, they might not only learn the nature of God and man, and see God's right to command; their obligations to obey; and the great evil of sin, from the law of Moses, as being therein held forth; but

* If it was wise in God so to order that the Israelites should be oppressed above a hundred years before their deliverance, and then pass through such great trials forty years more, before their entrance into the holy land, how know we but it may be wise that the Christian church in general, and we in New England in particular, should pass through very dark and trying times, for a long season, before God begins to work deliverance in that remarkable manner which may be expected at the ushering in of the glorious day. To be sure, there seems to be a foundation laid for great distresses, and of long continuance, for our sinful land. Better so than to be left to sleep on, secure in sin. Nothing so dreadful as to be given up to carnal security, and suffered to go on in wickedness and prosper.

might behold all these exemplified, in a most striking manner, in a series of facts. Let them but view the divine conduct in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, etc., and it would give them a most lively picture of the divine nature; for here they had the history of the Deity. And let them view the conduct of the Israelites from first to last, and it would give them a most lively picture of human nature; for here they had it acted out to the life. And God's right to command, their obligations to obey, and the great evil of sin, are set in the strongest light. Nor were the advantages of these transactions confined to those ages; for all these things happened, and were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are come. God is still the same, and so is human nature too; for, as face answers to face in a glass, so does the heart of man to man. O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things; to whom belongs glory forever! And how know we but that the grand affairs of the universe are all conducted as wisely as were these now in our view?

To conclude: let these four remarks be well attended to, and remembered: —

1. That, in all these instances of God's permitting sin, he had a view to the manifestation of himself. They gave him opportunities to act out his heart; and so to show what he was, and how he stood affected: and he intended, by his conduct, to set himself, that is, all his perfections, in a full, clear, strong point of light; that it might be known that he was the Lord, and that the whole earth might be filled with his glory.

2. And he intended to let his creatures give a true specimen of themselves; that it might be known what was in their hearts. But,

3. The advantages of acquaintance with God and ourselves are innumerable. We can be neither humble, holy, nor happy, without it. So that,

4. It may easily be seen, how that God, in the permission of sin, may design to advance his own glory, and the good of his creatures. And that this was really God's design, in the instances which have been under consideration, is manifest from the five books of Moses, in which the history of these things is recorded at large. Particularly, I desire the 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of Deuteronomy may be read, in this view.

THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON II.

YE THOUGHT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT UNTO GOOD.
Genesis l. 20.

WISDOM consists in choosing the best end, and contriving the most proper means to attain it.

The Messiah had been promised to our first parents about two thousand years ago; and the time of his advent was approaching; but the world were greatly unprepared for such an event. They did not know that they were in a fallen state, and that they needed a Redeemer and a Sanctifier. They neither knew God, nor themselves; what they were, nor what they ought to be; nor what they needed to bring them right; and were sinking, by swift degrees, into still grosser ignorance and the most stupid idolatry. And had God suffered them all to have taken their own course till the Messiah's birth, ignorance and depravity would have risen to such a height as to have rendered mankind wholly unprepared for the gospel dispensation.

Wherefore God must interpose, and some method must be taken to check the universal spread of idolatry and ignorance, and to revive the knowledge of the true God, and of the law of nature; and to make mankind sensible of their depravity, of their guilt and ill desert, and need of a redeemer and sanctifier; and so prepare a way for the coming of Christ, and the erection of his spiritual kingdom.

With these views, about two thousand years before the birth of the Messiah, God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and separated him from an idolatrous world, and chose his seed to be his people; that, in his dealings with them, he might bear a public testimony against idolatry, in the sight of all the

nations of the earth; and, at the same time, exhibit a most exact picture of himself in his conduct, and set his character in the most glaring, striking, affecting light; that, stupid as they were, they should be, as it were, forced to see and understand what he was. And, at the same time, he would let them know what they ought to be, and the greatness of their obligations to the Deity; and turn their hearts inside out, that they might see themselves, and discern their true character, and so feel their need of a redeemer and sanctifier. And then he would exhibit in types and shadows, that is, by sacrifices of atonement, and purifications for uncleanness, the nature of an atonement of Christ, and of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and thus prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, and the erection of his spiritual kingdom in the world; and that not only among the Jews, thus trained up, but also among Gentiles, who, in after ages, should be let into these divine dispensations and designs, and reap the benefit of all these preparatory and introductory steps.

Had Joseph not been sold, and had Jacob continued to live in the land of Canaan, with his family, and had his posterity there gradually increased, until they had filled all the land, — the Canaanites meanwhile dying off, as the Indians have done in New England these hundred and thirty years past, — I say, had his posterity gradually increased until they had filled all the land, without any uncommon changes, or any extraordinary interpositions of Providence, none of the forementioned ends could have been answered. Yea, there would apparently have been the utmost danger that the Israelites would have been no better than the Canaanites had been: and God might foresee that this would infallibly be the case; and so all his ends, in separating Abraham and his seed, wholly frustrated.

On the other hand, if Joseph is sold, if Jacob and his family move down and settle in Egypt, the chief seat of idolatry, a proper scene opens in the view of infinite wisdom, where all his wonders might be wrought; and fit opportunities, he foresaw, would present for the accomplishment of all the purposes of his heart.

Nothing further was needful than for God not to hinder Joseph's brethren, and they would sell him; not to hinder Potiphar's wife, and she would get him cast into prison, where he might be prepared for, and from whence he might be raised to the highest advancement, by which many noble and God-like ends might be answered. Nothing further was needful than for God not to hinder the king of Egypt, and he would oppress the Israelites till they were prepared for their egression;

not to hinder Pharaoh, and he would harden his heart, and refuse to let them go, until Egypt was filled with the wonderful works of God. Yea, if God hindered him not, into the Red Sea he would drive headlong, hurried on by the corruptions of his heart, that, in his destruction, God might show his power, and cause his name to be declared throughout all the earth. And now the Hebrews, rescued from Pharaoh's destroying sword, by almighty power, would be in the hands of God, their Deliverer, to be disciplined, to be humbled, and proved, and tried, that it might be known what was in their hearts; and that, finally, they might be prepared to enter the promised land, and execute the vengeance of the Almighty on those idolatrous nations, and be God's peculiar people, till the Messiah's coming, and the erection of his spiritual kingdom. I say, be God's peculiar people; to receive the law from Sinai; to be under God's immediate government; to keep the holy oracles; to preserve the predictions of the Messiah, and to answer many other noble and divine ends God had in view.

A plan, in which so much sin was to be permitted, and so much misery endured, might, by short-sighted mortals, have been thought dishonorable to God, and unhappy for the Israelites; but, under the management of infinite wisdom, it proves the direct contrary. Yea, for aught that appears, God could not have taken a better method, as things then stood in the world, to make himself known, and get honor to his great name, and make the Israelites sensible of their dependence upon him, and obligations to him, and engage them to perpetual obedience, than that; as it is written, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" yea, it was a plan not only suited to be beneficial in that age, but in all succeeding generations; and that in more instances than can well be enumerated. Particularly, it has furnished us with a *history of the Deity*, and with a *history of human nature*. Such a history as is indeed of infinite value; for every thing is exemplified in facts; by which the mind is instructed more clearly, and the heart reached more effectually, than in any other way.

The invisible God, whom no eye hath seen, or can see, and of whom it is so difficult for us, in this benighted world, to frame just conceptions, is brought upon the stage; and he acts out his nature before our eyes, with a design to set his true character in a clear and striking light. Here we see, as it were with our eyes, how he foreordained whatsoever came to pass; how he laid out the whole plan from the selling of Joseph to his advancement, and to Jacob's going down into Egypt; and

how they should be oppressed and brought into bondage, and how they should finally be brought forth, and led in the wilderness, and prepared for Canaan, etc. And we see the wisdom, glory, and beauty of his plan. Here we see what a regard he has for his own honor, and how his whole plan is suited to set him in that infinitely honorable point of light, which so exactly becomes him, as he is by nature God, and by original right the supreme Lord and Governor of the world. Here we see his resolution to maintain his authority, in his conduct to Pharaoh, that haughty rebel, who bid him defiance, and stoutly refused to let Israel go. Here we see his sovereign grace and self-moving goodness, as it were, forcing the infatuated Israelites from their beloved Egypt, and their beloved idols; and when he had the highest provocations to destroy them, how he wrought for his great name's sake, until he had prepared them for, and brought them into, the promised land. And how, in the mean time, he set his hatred of their sins in the clearest and strongest light; commanding the earth to open its mouth and swallow up hundreds, and the plague to go forth, from time to time, and cut down thousands in a moment; yea, dooming that whole generation to wander and fall in the wilderness for their crimes, reserving the good land for their posterity. Here we see him exercising his sovereignty, when the Israelites and the Egyptians both deserved destruction, and to have been buried alive in the Red Sea together; he had mercy on whom he would have mercy; and whom he would, he gave up to hardness of heart and ruin. And after the Israelites had been in the wilderness above a year, and had sufficiently shown what they were, and carried their provocation so high, that divine justice said, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them in a moment," still he wrought for his great name's sake, and had mercy on them, because he would have mercy on them; and was gracious to them, because he would be gracious to them; that is, from his self-moving goodness and sovereign grace.*

* Exodus xxxiii. 29. Numbers xiv. From these dispensations, which were acknowledged to be right by the Jews, St. Paul was able to justify the divine conduct, in his day, in casting off the Jews, and calling the Gentiles. (Rom. ix.) "If God had a right to give up Pharaoh to hardness of heart, and to destruction in the days of old, as ye Jews own, why not you now? — If the exercises of God's grace were sovereign then to your fathers, who deserved (God being judge) to be all consumed in a moment; why may not the Gentiles, notwithstanding their ill deserts, be now called and saved, from the same sovereign grace? God used to act as a sovereign; why may he not still? and if in one instance, why not in another altogether similar?" Nor could the Jew fairly evade the force of this reasoning. And if we should only suppose, that Pharaoh, after he was drowned, went to hell, and that the unbelieving Jews of that age, who were cast off by God for their infidelity, were eternally lost, then we have the doctrine of reprobation, which has been so much misunderstood and misrepresented, exempli-

And by all, we see that not any thing whatsoever is able to frustrate God's design, or hinder the faithful accomplishment of his promise to Abraham, that to his seed he would give the land of Canaan.

At the same time, we have human nature brought upon the stage, and experiments made upon the heart of man, in a great variety; whereby its true temper is as certainly determined as was ever the nature of any thing in the natural world, by the great Sir Isaac Newton.* So that, on these, as well as many other accounts, that plan was not only for the honor of God, and good of the Israelites, but for the benefit of mankind in all succeeding generations.

And how know we but that it was designed, by the infinitely wise God, as a little kind of picture, in which we might see, in miniature, the nature of God's government of the whole moral system, and the reasons of his permitting sin and misery to enter into the world he had made? Which brings me,

Secondly. After having viewed the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, in various plain instances, to proceed humbly to search into the wisdom of God, in *ever permitting* sin and misery to enter the world.

1. As all God's works are uniform, so we may justly argue, from the wisdom and beauty of particular parts, to the wisdom and beauty of the whole. As God's nature is always the same, and as he always acts like himself, so, therefore, his works are always harmonious and consistent. So that if we can see the

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fied in facts. For whatsoever God does in time, that he, from all eternity, intended to do. Yea, and that which is right for God to do in time, he had a right, from eternity, to determine to do. Yea, if God, in fact, governs the world well, then he did well to determine to govern it as he does. Reasonable creatures would never object against God's laying out a universal plan, if the plan did but suit their taste.

* *Objection.* "But it can never be supposed that the true character of human nature, in general, can be decided from the perverse conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness."

Answer. Was not their conduct, then, of a piece with the general tenor of their conduct, from that time and forward, for fifteen hundred years, when they slew their prophets, yea, and crucified the Son of God? (Acts vii. 51, 52.)

Obj. "If it was, yet it is not to be supposed, that every nation would have been so wicked and perverse as the Jews were, if under like circumstances."

Ans. But it is the common character of an apostate, fallen world, that they are "dead in sin." (Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3.)

Obj. "These words were spoken of the Gentiles, and so are nothing to the purpose."

Ans. Seeing, then, according to these men, the character of mankind cannot be learned from what is said, in the Old or New Testament, of Jews or Gentiles; but we, in this age and nation, are quite another kind of creatures — so benevolent, so good, so virtuous; methinks the Old and New Testaments are writings not suited to our case; as they are not adapted to men of our character. And perhaps this is one reason those ancient writings are in so low credit with many in the British dominions, and Plato begins to be more admired than Moses or St. Paul.

wisdom of God in the permission of sin in some instances, we may justly argue to his wisdom in his whole grand scheme; yea, and from the wisdom, glory, and beauty of particular parts, we may be rationally convinced, that God's grand scheme is perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty, although it be so incomprehensibly great, as to confound our understandings. If we certainly know that God's works are all uniform, and if there is one small part that we can understand and comprehend, and if we see this is perfectly wise, we may be assured the whole is so too; although when we try to look into it, we feel our minds quite overwhelmed with its incomprehensible greatness.

2. Were there no particular instance in which we could see the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, yet, from the perfections of the divine nature alone, we have such full evidence that he must always act in the wisest and best manner, as that we ought not in the least to doubt it.

In the days of eternity, long before the foundation of the world, this system, now in existence, and this plan, which now takes place, and all other possible systems, and all other possible plans, more in number perhaps than the very sands on the seashore, all equally lay open to the divine view, and one as easy to Almightiness as another. He had his choice. He had none to please but himself; beside him there was no being. He had a perfectly good taste, and nothing to bias his judgment, and was infinite in wisdom: this he chose; and this, of all possible systems, therefore, was the best, infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude being judges. If, therefore, the whole were as absolutely incomprehensible by us as it is by children of four years old, yet we ought firmly to believe the whole to be perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty.

3. But if all God's works are uniform, as has been said, we may not only argue from the wisdom of particular parts to the wisdom of the whole, but also from the special nature of particular parts to the special nature of the whole; and so, from a right idea of particular parts, which we are able to comprehend, we may have some right conceptions of the whole, although the whole is too great for our conception. And so here is a clew which will lead us to a right view of the true nature of the whole moral system, and help us, at least, to some partial view of the wisdom, glory, and beauty of the whole.

4. And, indeed, it seems to have been God's design, in this state of instruction and discipline, where we first come into existence, and, from small beginnings, are to grow up to a more full knowledge of God, and insight into his moral government of the world; the contemplation of which will afford the most

intense delight to all holy beings, throughout eternal ages — I say, it seems to have been God's design to suit things to the present weakness of our capacities, by representing the general nature of the whole moral system, in some select parts of it, giving us a kind of a picture of the whole, in miniature, to lead us to some right notions of the nature of the whole.

It is certain, that as all God's works are uniform, amidst all their infinite variety, so it has been his method, in his lesser works in the moral world, designedly to give a faint image of his greater, and hereby prepare the way for their being more easily understood. So the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was designed as a shadow of our spiritual redemption by Christ; and the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon was designed as a resemblance of the deliverance of the Christian church out of mystical Babylon. And there are almost innumerable instances of the like nature in Scripture; yea, the whole Jewish dispensation was evidently designed to be emblematical. So, indeed, was every thing in the natural world, from which metaphors and allusions are constantly brought, by Christ and his apostles, to represent and illustrate spiritual and divine things, as well as from the Jewish dispensation. And indeed, this was workman-like, and becoming the infinite wisdom of the great Contriver and Former of all things, to whom all his works were known from the beginning, and who designed this lower world as the grand stage of action for moral agents, so to order things in all his works, and in all his dispensations, as that one thing should give light to another; things in the natural world, to things in the moral; things in the Jewish dispensation, to things in the Christian.

It would, therefore, be perfectly analogous to the rest of God's works, if he had designed some eminent parts of his grand plan of moral government to contain, in miniature, the nature of the whole, and contrived them to represent, and suited them to point out to us the wisdom and beauty of his grand and glorious scheme, which is too large for our present comprehension; and too difficult to be understood, but by the help of little pictures, where the whole is contained in miniature.

5. We may venture to affirm, that of necessity it must be the case, that the nature of the parts will certainly show the nature of the whole, in a moral system, under the government of Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. For while he constantly acts like himself, his whole conduct will be of a piece, always like itself; and so one part of it will illustrate the nature of another; and so, from the knowledge

of the nature of various parts, we may certainly argue to the nature of the whole. As, let us but diligently observe a wise and good man, who is uniform and steady in his ways; and, from repeated instances of his conduct, we shall enter into the knowledge of his temper in general, and perceive the views and designs which govern him. So, let us but attend to the divine conduct, as recorded in that book, which may justly be denominated the history of the Deity, and enter into his views and designs, in particular instances of his conduct, as there intimated; and we may, with sufficient certainty, determine his moral character, and the general nature and design of his whole plan. Show me, therefore, his views and designs in suffering Joseph to be sold; Israel to be oppressed; Pharaoh to harden his heart; Israel to murmur and rebel, and fall in the wilderness; and let me into the wisdom of his conduct, in these particular parts of his grand scheme, and then assure me that the whole system is governed by the same infinitely wise Being; and how can I doubt the wisdom of the whole, while I behold the wisdom of these particular parts? or how can I be at a loss for the general nature of the whole, while I behold the nature of these particular parts, and firmly believe that God always acts like himself, and keeps up a constant uniformity through all the infinite varieties of cases and circumstances, that ever occur in his moral government of the world?

6. If, therefore, the plan which infinite wisdom contrived, to bring Jacob's family into Egypt, and from thence through the Red Sea and wilderness into Canaan, in which so much sin was permitted, and so much misery endured, was, all things considered, the wisest and best; as being so exactly suited to set all the perfections of God in the fullest and strongest point of light, and at the same time to unmask their hearts, and set their absolute dependence on God, and great obligations to him, and the infinite evil of sin, in such a light, as had the most powerful tendency to induce them, with penitent, humble, broken hearts, in an entire self-diffidence, to put their trust only in God, and be wholly devoted to him; to fear him, and love him, and walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory; — I say, if that plan was the wisest that could have been contrived to answer these ends, and so the best suited to promote the glory of God, and the best good of the Israelites, and to answer many noble ends in that age, and in all succeeding generations; such, no doubt, must be the whole of God's moral government of the world; in which immensely great plan so much sin is permitted, and so much misery endured; that is, it must be the best contrived scheme

possible, to advance the glory of God, and the best good of the moral system.

I am sensible there are many objections which will be apt to arise in the reader's mind, and which are capable of being put into a very plausible dress, and which, at first sight, may seem to appear quite unanswerable. Nor am I unwilling they should be set in their strongest light. It is best to look on all sides, and that with the utmost care and impartiality. And every honest reader, who sincerely desires to know the truth; to understand the reasons of the divine conduct, and to see the wisdom, glory, and beauty of his universal plan, will be naturally disposed to look up to heaven, and say, "O thou Father of lights, thou Fountain of all knowledge, sensible that we lack wisdom, and encouraged by thy gracious invitation, we come to thee, who givest liberally to all that ask, nor upbraidest, nor deniest the most unworthy, who ask in the name of Christ; open thou our eyes, that we may see the wisdom of thy government, and behold the beauty of thy conduct, that we may not only justify thy ways to men, but still, more than ever, love and fear that fearful and glorious name of thine, the Lord our God!" For there is not one point, in natural or revealed religion, attended with so great difficulties as this: therefore we greatly need to have our hearts purified, and our minds enlightened by divine grace, that, with a good taste and an unbiased judgment, we may search into the hidden mysteries of God's great and eternal kingdom.

The objections are as follow: —

1. "How could it be for the honor of the Supreme Lord and Governor of the universe, to suffer Satan, his enemy, by his lies, to deceive, seduce, and persuade innocent man to rebel against his sacred Majesty, and subject himself and all his race to death and ruin?"

2. "How could it be to the best good of the moral system, that this lower world, instead of being inhabited by a race of incarnate angels, ever celebrating the praises of their great Creator, perfectly happy in his image and favor, should sink down into so near a resemblance to hell, in wickedness and woe? O, how infinitely better would it have been, if, instead of sin and misery here, and eternal pains of hell hereafter, to be suffered by such innumerable multitudes, all had been forever holy and happy!"

3. "How can it be made to appear, that sin and misery were at all needful, much less absolutely necessary, in a system originally holy and happy, to answer any valuable ends? Would it not be to limit the Holy One of Israel, to say, that he

could find out no other way so good as this to exalt God, and render the system holy and happy?"

4. "If God wills sin, then it seems sin is agreeable to his will. And if, from all eternity, he decreed the misery of his creatures, then it seems their misery suits him. Both which, as is granted on all hands, are directly contrary to reason and to Scripture."

Before we attempt a direct answer to these objections, let three or four things be premised.

1. Be it so, that God's permitting sin and misery to enter into the world, appears to us ever so dark; yet this is no argument at all against the wisdom, glory, and beauty of the divine conduct, in this affair. For there have been instances of the divine conduct, in all appearance dark to perfection, which, in the result, have proved perfect in wisdom and beauty. When Jacob saw his son's coat all stained with blood, he had nothing but darkness and death before his eyes. "An evil beast," said he, "hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." Wherefore he "rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son, and refused to be comforted." Nor had he the least gleam of light, for above twenty years, in this dark affair; yea, it grew darker, when Simeon was left bound in Egypt, never to be released, unless Benjamin went also. "Joseph is not," says he, "and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." So he spake, and so he thought; for so things appeared; but yet, afterwards, he viewed the whole plan in a very different light, as being contrived and brought about by infinite wisdom and goodness. And doubtless he was ready to say, "Never let me, a poor short-sighted creature, venture again to call in question the wisdom of the Supreme Governor of the world, all whose ways are perfect. Remember it, O my soul, from this time forward; and, for the future, let me learn to do my duty, and cheerfully leave God to order all things as he pleases; firmly believing all his conduct to be wise, whether I can see through it or not."

And how dark to Moses, fled into the land of Midian to save his life, must the divine conduct appear, in suffering his brethren, the children of Israel, to be so cruelly used by Pharaoh? Nor had he the least gleam of light, in this dark affair, for forty years; yet it afterwards appeared to be full of the wonderful wisdom of God, as we have before observed; and, no doubt, Moses saw it to his abundant satisfaction.

But as for the inhabitants of Egypt, when they heard that Pharaoh, their grand monarch, and all his hosts, were drowned

in the Red Sea; and as for the Israelites, whose carcasses were doomed to fall in the wilderness, these dispensations were to them so dark, and they in such a temper, that it was near or quite impossible they should see the wisdom of God in them. Nor was it strange they could not see. But this leads me to add, —

2. That it is not at all strange that God's conduct, in the permission of sin, should appear exceeding dark to us, how wise, glorious, and beautiful soever it is in itself, and in the eyes of God. (1.) Because our views of God's grand plan are so very imperfect. When God has finished his scheme, all holy beings will easily see the beauty of it; for then it will appear what he had in view, and how wisely every thing was ordered to answer the noblest and best ends. It was easy, when Jacob beheld Joseph governor over all the land of Egypt, for him to see through an affair, which before, for a long course of years, had been absolutely inexplicable. Besides, (2.) It is not strange that God's present plan of government appears so dark to us, however divine and glorious it is in itself, considering how ill a taste we have. It is not to be expected that fallen creatures, greatly alienated from the Deity, and of a temper quite contrary to his, should be suited with his plan of government. If wicked men are enemies to God, and enemies to his law, as the Scriptures teach, (Rom. viii. 7,) they are not in a capacity to discern a plan all over divine. It was not strange that the Egyptians could not see the wisdom of God in the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts. Nor was it strange that the wicked Israelites were so far from seeing the wisdom of God, in dooming their carcasses to fall in the wilderness, that they were rather disposed to blaspheme his name. Yea, they began their blasphemy before they received their doom. And when they might have gone right on to Canaan, had it not been their own fault, they began to say, that God had brought them out of Egypt on purpose to destroy them, (Num. xiv.) just as some desperate sinners, who are deaf to all the calls of the gospel, and refuse to march for the heavenly Canaan, sometimes, in fits of horror, are ready to think that God made them on purpose to damn them. It is easy for us to see the unreasonableness and perverseness of the children of Israel; and impenitent, obstinate sinners are evidently quite as much to blame: but you cannot make them see it; nor could Moses make the Israelites see it in their case. Nor is it to be expected that creatures, so far sunk into depravity and guilt, will be disposed to justify God and his ways, although all his dispensations are ever so wise and just; but then their dislike to the

divine government, be it ever so great, is no sign but that it is perfectly wise, holy, just, and good. Moses thought not the less honorably of God's conduct in the overthrow of Pharaoh, because it looked so dark to the Egyptians. Nor do the inhabitants of heaven think the less honorably of God's conduct in the permission and punishment of sin, in general, because it looks so dark to obstinate sinners. God has given us an instance.

About one hundred and sixty-eight years before the Babylonish captivity, after the Israelites had been in the promised land six hundred and ninety-three years, and, by their perverseness, had worn out God's patience, so that God was provoked to give them up to their hearts' lusts, Isaiah was sent with this awful message to them: "Go and tell the people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not: see ye, indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," etc. "Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." (Isa. vi.) Than which nothing could look more dark to the guilty Jews, thus doomed to destruction. Yet, to the inhabitants of heaven, God's conduct, in all this, appeared to be unutterably glorious; so that, upon the occasion, they even "cried," as under the deepest impressions, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." So again, (Rev. xix.,) we have the heavenly hosts represented as in the highest ecstasy of joy, on occasion of the destruction of mystical Babylon; which yet, no doubt, when it comes to pass, will appear inexpressibly dark and glorious to the pope and his party; although the poor persecuted saints in popish countries will be ready to join the heavenly hosts in their songs of praise.

3. When I think over former dispensations of Providence — Joseph's affair, and how dark it appeared to Jacob; the case of the Israelites in sore bondage in Egypt, and how dark it appeared to Moses, fled into Midian; and that this Jacob and this Moses were the best of men, and the favorites of Heaven; and yet the divine conduct to them was absolutely unaccountable; and as I look along through the Bible, I can think of other instances of the like nature, one after another, till I come to the crucifixion of Christ, the most horrid sin that was ever committed; an affair exceeding dark to the disciples, the best of men then in the world, and who were even ready, things looked so dark, to give up all hopes of his being the Messiah; — I say, when I consider these, I cannot but conclude, that if the most holy and knowing men on earth were entirely unable to solve the fore-mentioned difficulties relative to the

permission of sin, yet it would be no just inducement to doubt of the divine wisdom.

4. However dark the affair appears, or however unanswerable the objections may seem to be, yet we have strict demonstration that, of all possible plans, this is the best; for, before the foundation of the world, it was at God's election to create, or not to create. And of all possible systems, he had his choice: nor was there any thing to bias his judgment; nor was it possible he should make a mistake: all things were open and naked before him; he knew which was the best; and he chose this: and therefore this, to him, appeared preferable to any other; and therefore it was really the best.

And what, then, if we are not able fully to solve the difficulties? Is it not altogether reasonable to conclude, that it is owing to our not seeing the whole plan, or to our want of a good taste, or both? It is certain that we are very far from a full view of the whole plan. We came into existence, as it were, but yesterday; we are just emerging out of nonentity: we still border on non-existence; we are but half awake, if so much. When we enter into the eternal world, if this short period is well spent, we may hope to have our intellectual powers quite awake, and to be in a better capacity to search into the nature, and discern the beauties, of God's eternal kingdom. And besides the narrowness of our present views, our taste, too, is at present much vitiated. The best of men in this world are far from that high relish for moral beauty, which is needful to render them good judges, on a plan so altogether holy and divine as this must certainly be. And while we are conscious to ourselves, that, with Peter, we are apt to "savor not the things which be of God, but the things which be of men;" and that our minds lie under many biases and prejudices; too strongly attached to our private interest; but little concerned for the honor of the Divine Majesty, or for the honor of his government, and the welfare of his everlasting kingdom; little caring for any thing, further than our own interest is concerned; too much like the Israelites in the wilderness, who were always murmuring against God and against Moses; although God was all the while taking the wisest methods with them, and Moses was faithful to him that appointed him; but if their appetites and desires were crossed, and they disappointed in their narrow, selfish schemes, they could see no beauty in God's conduct, nor glory in his grand designs, but wished themselves back again to Egypt: not caring what became of the honor of God's great name, and quite stupid to all the noble ends God had in view, in their separation from the

rest of the world, to be his peculiar people; — I say, while we are conscious to this low spiritedness, to this mean, narrow, selfish temper, and feel ourselves so much untouched with the infinite greatness and glory of the Deity, and so little interested in and concerned for the honor of his great name, and the everlasting establishment of his authority, and general good of the moral system, we cannot but be sensible that we are very unfit judges on the beauty and goodness of his plan; as it is easy to see the Israelites were, on the wisdom and beauty of God's conduct to them in the wilderness. They were too low spirited, and of too mean and selfish views, to be struck with the beauty of those noble and Godlike designs God had in view, in their separation from the rest of the world.

To God it appeared of vast importance, as things were then situated in the world, to give a check to the universal spread of idolatry and ignorance, and to revive the knowledge of the true God, and of the true religion. And, in a view to these noble ends, all his conduct in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, appeared to him perfectly wise and beautiful. To the Israelites, nothing appeared of importance, but that their interest, ease, and comfort, should be consulted and provided for; which not being done to their minds in the wilderness, they heartily repented they ever hearkened to Moses, or ever left Egypt, and would have deserted Moses, made a captain, and returned, had not Almightiness interposed. And the idols, leeks, onions, and flesh-pots of Egypt would have given them content; while the name of the God of Abraham sunk into universal contempt by the means, among all nations, and idolatry became more established than ever; as it would have done, had they deserted Moses and returned, as was by them proposed.

Now, it is plain this people were no proper judges of the wisdom and beauty of God's conduct. They were of so ill a taste, and their temper was so different from God's, that they would naturally be blind to the beauty of his ways, and always stand ready to quarrel with him. Had their temper, from the very first, been right, and their taste good, they might have had a sufficient insight into God's designs, although very far from a full view. I say, a sufficient insight into God's designs, to have discovered a great deal of wisdom in his conduct, in suffering Pharaoh to exalt himself and bid defiance, till all God's wonders were wrought in Egypt; and afterwards to harden his heart, and pursue Israel, and drive into the midst of the Red Sea; that there God might show his power, and cause his name to be declared throughout all the earth: that Israel might know

that he was the Lord, and might, in ages to come, tell their children, and their children's children, of all these mighty works; that they might know that the gods of the heathen were no gods, and might forever cleave to the God of their fathers.

Nor had they the least reason, at any one time, from the day they passed through the Red Sea, to dislike one step which God took: nor would they have done it, had they a right disposition; yea, a good taste would have enabled them to have seen much wisdom in all God's ways. "Here, in this wilderness, where there is neither bread, nor water, nor flesh, even here is a good place for the God of Abraham, our father, to show his wisdom, power, and goodness, and train us up to a sense of his all-sufficiency, and bring us to live wholly upon him, as children upon a father, and to be wholly devoted to him." Thus might they have thought. And instead of murmuring at every new difficulty, and then falling under the frowns of the Almighty, they might have spent their whole time in prayer and praise, till they arrived at Mount Sinai, and while they were setting up the tabernacle, and while the spies were gone to search out the land. And had they done so, had they been of such a temper, and spent their time thus, those fourteen or fifteen months, all in prayer and praise, the whole congregation would have been prepared to have disregarded the ten spies, and cheerfully to have joined with Caleb and Joshua, saying, "If the Lord is with us, there is no danger. Have not we all seen what he did in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and since? And he that has done these things cannot want power or willingness to do what remains, unless, by our unbelief and perverseness, we should provoke him to cast us off." And so they might have marched right on to Canaan, driven out the inhabitants, and taken possession. But they were of a temper every way the reverse; and they acted as they felt; and it happened to them accordingly. Their carcasses were doomed to fall in the wilderness: they behaved like wild bulls in a net upon the occasion; blasphemed God; stormed at Moses; till God was obliged to strike them dead by hundreds and by thousands, from time to time, before he could subdue them.

Now, "they were our ensamples, and these things were written for our instruction." Let us take heed, therefore, that we do not murmur at the divine conduct in the government of the world, as they did; nor venture blasphemously to say, "He has brought us out of Egypt into this wilderness on purpose to destroy us. He has suffered mankind to fall into a state of sin and misery, that he might delight himself in the

eternal torments of the damned." Whereas the Israelites would not have fallen in the wilderness, had they not perversely despised the good land, which flowed with milk and honey, and refused to give credit to the revelation they had of God's readiness to lead them into Canaan. And let it be remembered that it was not God's decree, but their own dearly beloved lusts and corruptions, which influenced them to conduct as they did. Nor shall we ever be sentenced to hell, unless we despise the glories of heaven, and prefer the leeks and onions of Egypt; the pleasures of sin and of this world; and so turn our backs upon God, and refuse to give credit to the revelation made to us in the gospel of God's readiness to be reconciled through Christ, and to grant us his Holy Spirit to lead us on to the heavenly Canaan; and refuse to comply with the gospel way of life. And if we do act thus wickedly, it is as reasonable we should perish, as it was that the carcasses of the wicked Israelites should fall in the wilderness. And as their carcasses falling in the wilderness was overruled by infinite wisdom, for the general good of that community, and to fill the whole earth with his glory, so will the righteous punishment of the wicked eternally in hell be overruled to the good of the intelligent system, and God will be exalted throughout all his dominions. Read Revelation xix. 1—6.

The wicked Israelites did not feel themselves to blame, to be sure, not much to blame, for all their murmurings and rebellions. "Who among mortals," they were ready to say, "would conduct otherwise than we do, under the like circumstances? We were always against leaving Egypt, and entering on so wild an expedition. God has contrived it on purpose for our destruction. Fools that we were, ever to leave the fleshpots of Egypt. Would to God we had lived and died there; this had been our highest interest. Therefore, let us make a captain, and return, and make our peace with the Egyptians, as well as we can, and submit to our bondage forever." When, therefore, the judgments of God came upon them in such a manner, they would naturally be so far from seeing the justice or wisdom of the divine conduct, that their hearts would be full of blasphemous thoughts against God and Moses; and the whole divine conduct would appear dark and unaccountable, to the highest degree. And in all this they show the very spirit of unhumbled, obstinate sinners, who are insensible of their sin and guilt, and desert of eternal damnation, and are ready to say, "God brought us into being on purpose to damn us: we had no hand in it: we would not have chose it: would to God we had never been born! O that we could return to non-

existence! that would be our true interest;" and instead of seeing the wisdom and justice of God, in his dispensations towards them, they are full of blasphemous thoughts, and the whole of the divine conduct appears to them dark and unaccountable, to the highest degree.

Had the Israelites been thoroughly sensible how hateful their Egyptian temper, their carnal disposition, their infidelity, and their continual murmurings were, and how much to blame they appeared in the sight of God, the justice of the divine conduct would by them have been easily seen; and that would have prepared them to have seen the wisdom of his ways, too. "It is fit such wretches as we should be shut out of the promised land, and our carcasses should fall in this wilderness; and righteous art thou, O Lord, in our doom. We have but our just deserts. No wonder the earth swallows up such monsters, and that thousands are struck dead in a moment, who are guilty of such crimes. The honor of divine Majesty requires this severity; and even the good of our posterity makes it necessary." Thus would they have thought. Nor can unhumbled, obstinate sinners ever discern the wisdom and beauty of the divine government in general, until first their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they cordially approve of the justice of God's law, by which they stand condemned; and are "born again;" as it is written, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." For it is the "pure in heart," and they only, that "shall see God;" for "the natural man," who is destitute of a spiritual, holy, divine taste, "discerneth not the things of the spirit of God;" seeth not the divine beauty of the law or of the gospel, and, for the same reason, is blind to the wisdom, glory, and beauty of God's universal plan — so very blind, that the full and clear revelation to be made of it at the day of judgment, how convincing soever it may be to their reason and conscience, will be far from suiting their hearts. Nor will the beauty and amiableness of it be by them ever discerned; for, as the obstinate Israelites, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, never saw the beauty of God's conduct towards that congregation, so neither will those, who die impenitent, ever see the beauty and glory of God's universal plan. But in heaven it will be seen.

To conclude: As all the hard thoughts of the divine conduct, which are to be found in the hearts of mankind, through a fallen, depraved, guilty world, arise entirely from our partial views and bad taste; so there is no other remedy, but, first of all, to have our hearts renewed and sanctified by divine grace; and then to endeavor to enlarge our views of God's universal

plan, and search into the nature of the divine government, and the glorious designs and noble ends which infinite wisdom has in view, and will at last accomplish.

And as the Bible contains an authentic history of the conduct of the Deity for a long series of many hundred years; and, by prophetic representations, opens to our view things yet to come to pass, as far down as to the end of the world, and the general judgment, and the consummation of all things; so hither should we come, with honest minds and pure hearts, and form all our notions of God's moral perfections, the nature of his moral government, and of his views, ends, and designs, in all his works, from what we find here written. Nor ought any solutions of difficulties to be accounted right, but such as quadrate exactly with, yea, are the natural result of, Scripture representations.

Some of the heathen philosophers, who knew no better, imagined there were two gods; a good god, the author of all good in the system, whom they called Oromasdes, and an evil god, the author of all evil in the system, whom they called Arimanius. But it is enough for us to confute this hypothesis, that the Bible teaches us that there is but one God, and that he is absolutely supreme, and does according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and that his providence extends to every thing, both good and bad. And it is supposed that those remarkable words, in Isa. xlv. 6, 7, directed to Cyrus, king of Persia, where the forementioned notion of two gods anciently prevailed, were designed in express contradiction to that doctrine. "I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things."

Some, who profess to adhere to divine revelation, in order to solve the difficulties relative to God's permission of sin, affirm, it came to pass unexpectedly to the divine Being; as he was not capable of foreseeing what would be the conduct of free agents. But it is enough for us, to confute this hypothesis, that we have hundreds of instances in Scripture of God's foreknowledge of the conduct of free agents, and that it is a doctrine constantly taught and inculcated in the Bible.*

Others, to solve the difficulties, have asserted that it was not in the power of God to prevent the fall of free agents, without destroying their free agency, and turning them into intelligent machines, incapable of virtue as well as of vice. But it is

* See this proved at large in Mr. Edwards on Liberty, pages 98—116.

enough for us, to confute this hypothesis, that it is contrary to plain Scripture representations, which teach us, that the man Christ Jesus, our second Adam, was a free agent, capable of the highest virtue, and yet in a confirmed state, so that he could not sin; as are also all the saints and angels now in heaven. From whence it appears, that it was in God's power to have confirmed all intelligences at first; and left them moral agents notwithstanding.

Others, to solve the difficulties still more fully, have not only asserted as above, but also denied the eternity of hell torments, and affirmed the universal salvation of men and devils. But it is enough for us, to confute this hypothesis, that, instead of its being taught in Scripture, it is contrary to what those infallible writings affirm, in language as plain, and express, and repeated, as could have been expected, if God had intended to establish us ever so fully in the belief of the eternity of hell torments; of which more afterwards.

But it will be said, "If God certainly foreknew that man would fall, unless he interposed and undertook for their safety; and if it was in his power to have done it; and if millions would be eternally miserable in hell if he did not, why did not he interpose and undertake?" Not, I dare say, for want of forethought, or of a thorough weighing of the affair, with all its consequences; for he had the whole in full view, from eternal ages. Nor will any pretend it was absolutely without any end at all; for an infinitely wise Being acts always upon design.

Now, God, of his infinite mercy, grant, that by a diligent attention to the divine oracles, and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we may come to such an understanding of this dispensation of his providence, as may tend to create in us the greatest dread of sin, and the highest veneration for the Divine Majesty; and show us our entire, absolute dependence on God, and infinite obligations to him; that we may learn to be perfectly self-diffident; to trust wholly in God, and live wholly to him, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory in the church world without end. AMEN.

THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON III.

YE THOUGHT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT UNTO GOOD.
Genesis l. 20.

WERE the supreme Monarch of the universe an arbitrary, despotic being, conducting without any regard to what is fitting and best, having no reason or motive for what he doth, nor any end in view, all our inquiries and researches into the wisdom of God, in the permission of sin, must be forever in vain. If he makes his will his only rule of action, and wills as he does, without any reason or motive, a stop, an eternal stop, ought to be put to all inquiries; for no reason is to be sought for a thing which is done absolutely, without any reason at all. But if the supreme Monarch of the universe is a being of infinite wisdom, and always chooses what is best, and does what is most fitting, working all things "after the counsel of his own will," then his universal plan must be, yea, we may be quite certain that it actually is, perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty. And now it becomes us to awaken all the powers of our souls to attention; and it is worth our while to dwell whole days, and months, and years, on this greatest and noblest of all themes. And if we feel that the immense greatness of the plan confounds us, and find ourselves still at a loss, yet being assured the whole is perfect in beauty, we will look into it as far as we can; and hasten to prepare for the world of light above, where the glories of this grand scheme will open to our view, and afford matter of the sweetest contemplation, and most divine delight, through eternal ages. Since we are but just emerged out of non-existence; have so very small an acquaintance with God's world, and so feeble and weak a taste; so poor a discernment of what is most beautiful and best, it

must not seem strange to us if we can see but a little way into the glories of the divine plan. Yet, knowing that it is so very exceeding glorious, being chosen by infinite wisdom before all other possible plans, although infinite in number and variety, in the view of omniscience, we may ardently long to look into it, and search the Scriptures daily; study the nature of the Deity, and lift up our eyes to heaven for divine light and instruction.

All that hath been said in the foregoing sermons being kept in mind, that we may now enter directly into a view of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, and lay a foundation for the solution of all objections, we must look back to the beginning of God's works, and view his conduct, from step to step, and inquire into the reasons of each as we go along. And God grant us attentive minds, and right and enlarged views, and a good taste to discern the beauty and glory of his universal plan. And let us begin as the Bible begins; for that best of books is to be our constant guide; the man of our counsel; a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths, in all the way we go.

1. A grand and noble theatre was erected by God; a standing, visible evidence of his eternal power and Godhead; completely furnished out, as a place of habitation for man; and as the grand stage of action and scene of all God's wonderful works, till the day of judgment. What use is to be made of the material system, after the day of judgment, shall be considered in its place.

When we read the first verse in Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," with what follows in that chapter, we behold the whole material system arising out of nothing into being, by God's almighty power. First it exists a chaos, "without form and void," buried in profound darkness; but in six days, the whole is set in a most harmonious and beautiful order; a visible and noble specimen of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of the great Eternal. And how know we but that the intellectual system, reduced to so near a resemblance of a chaos, by the revolt and prevailing influence of the angels who left their first estate, will yet, under the conduct of infinite wisdom, even under the conduct of Messiah the Prince, stand forth in perfect order, and the most beautiful harmony; a bright and noble image of all the glorious perfections of the invisible God?

2. A theatre being erected, proper to raise, in intelligent creatures, sublime and exalted thoughts of God, in the next place Man, a noble creature, an intelligent free agent, capable of moral action, and a proper subject of moral government, is

formed by God, and placed upon the stage, as head of a numerous race, and made lord of this lower world. "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth."

And here it ought to be observed, and it ought never to be forgotten by us, that God, in the capacity of Creator, did well by his creature, man. He was made capable of knowing, loving, obeying, and enjoying God; as also of seeing the beauty, and tasting the sweetness, of the fruits of paradise; and he had a high relish for knowledge and happiness. Besides, he was formed for society, and had an agreeable companion, and the prospect of a happy posterity, who would grow up and honor and love him as their common father, through all generations. And he had open to his view all the glories of the visible creation, to inspire him with sublime and exalted thoughts of God, who had brought him into existence, and made him lord of all here below. Surely God, the Creator, dealt well by his creature, man, whom he thus made but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honor. "And God saw every thing that he made, and, behold, it was very good." And, therefore, —

3. Man was under the greatest obligations to love the infinitely glorious God, his Maker, with all his heart, and to be for ever in subjection to his authority, and obedient to his will. And this was not only his duty, but such was his make, that it would have afforded him the most refined pleasure and delight: therefore, let it be repeated again, that God, his Creator, had done well by his creature, man.* And if, after all this, he should fall from God, it must be his own fault; nor could he any longer deserve the favor of his Maker, but to sink under his everlasting displeasure. Therefore, of course, his everlasting welfare must depend on his good behavior; and had there been no covenant or constitution at all, only the mere law of nature, yet, according to that, it would have become the Most High, as moral Governor and Judge of the world, in case of the

* *Question.* How was it possible for man, created in such holy and happy circumstances, ever to sin?

Answer. It is thought by some very difficult to answer this question. And had neither angels nor men ever sinned, perhaps it might have been thought an impossible thing that they ever should have sinned; which view of the case I desire the reader to keep in mind, and meanwhile wait a little for a solution of the difficulty proposed.

rebellion of his creature, man, to have testified his high displeasure against his crime, in his everlasting destruction; for "the wages of sin is death." The honor of the Deity would have called for such a punishment, as well as the good of the intelligent system, that all might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. Wherefore, God, as the holy and good Governor of the world, expressly assures his creature, man, what he might depend upon, in case of disobedience. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

And thus also God did well by his creature, man, in the capacity of his moral Governor. He let him know his great obligations to obedience; how much he insisted upon it; how highly he should resent his disobedience. That he would cast him not only out of his favor, and out of paradise, but out of this world; would even put him to death, and send his guilty soul, under the divine displeasure, naked, forlorn, undone, to everlasting despair and woe; no hope being given of any relief. "Thou shalt surely die." And what more could God have done, as his moral Governor, to have prevented his apostacy and ruin? If, after all this, he would venture to disobey, must he not be forever inexcusable?

4. God took it for granted that he had now done enough, and said enough; and might, becoming his character, as his lord and king, not only demand, but reasonably expect, obedience, and justly suspend his everlasting welfare on that condition. Yea, he judged that, as Governor of the world, it became him to do so, that he might secure his own rights, and maintain the honor of his authority. Nor did he look upon himself obliged to be his keeper, and become surety for him, and undertake to preserve him from sin, by his constant interposition; but judged he might, having done enough, and said enough, now leave him to his own choice, as having all needful qualifications to render him a proper subject of moral government; having sufficient internal abilities, and sufficient outward advantages, to know and do his duty. And, accordingly, God did leave him to his choice. He was deceived by Satan's lies; broke the divine law, and fell into ruin; as the event recorded in the third chapter of Genesis sufficiently proves; but God and his throne were guiltless.

5. Our first parents' design, in eating of the forbidden fruit, was to make a surprising advance in knowledge and happiness; not by such slow degrees as they had before expected, but at once to "become as Gods." Deceived by Satan's lies, captivated by this temptation, the food also appearing pleasant to the eye, and good for food, they took and ate.

Satan's design was to bring dishonor upon God, ruin upon man, and then to lift up himself, exult, and triumph in his deed. Being an inveterate enemy to God, and to all good, and having a peculiar spite at man,* nothing could give him greater joy, than to ruin a new-made world, which, as it appeared to him, God had created for the honor of his great name, and as a place of happy abode for his creature, man; to see God's creature give more credit to him than to his Maker; to see God's subject desert his rightful Sovereign and Lord, and join with him; to see God's authority disregarded, and himself obeyed; — I say, to see God thus disobeyed, disappointed, dishonored, man ruined; this lower creation spoiled, while he himself is believed, obeyed, and honored, would perfectly suit the devil's heart, so full of pride, of enmity against God, and ill will to man.

God's design in permitting Satan so far to succeed in this most hellish attempt, was, that he might take occasion to bring more honor to God, and to make the good part of the creation more humble, holy, and happy; and, finally, as effectually to disappoint Satan in all his schemes, as was Pharaoh, when he and his army lay overwhelmed in the Red Sea; which design, for the encouragement of our first parents, was hinted to them soon after the fall — "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

When the great Omniscient saw that rebellion would break out in heaven, and the infection reach down to this lower world, and spread all over the earth, he practically said, "After all I have done for them as their Creator, and said to them as their moral Governor, I and my throne are guiltless; to themselves I leave them; and now will it be known what is in their hearts; and I also will take occasion to show what is in my heart; and they shall know that I am the Lord, and the whole intelligent system shall be filled with my glory;" analogous to what is written in 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Deut. viii. 2. Exod. x. 2.

1. God knew that it belonged to the nature of all finite beings to be mutable and peccable; and that the best might degenerate so far as to become the worst: no being in the

* The angels are appointed ministering spirits, to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation, (Heb. i. 14;) and, perhaps, as soon as man was created, it was revealed to all the hosts of heaven, that it should be their employment to attend upon Adam and his numerous race. Perhaps Satan might think this too degrading, for one so superior to man as he perceived himself to be, to be thus employed; and so pride, his first sin, might take occasion to rise in his heart. And to be revenged on God and man both at once, he laid a scheme for man's seduction and ruin; and, from that day to this, hath never ceased to study our mischief. If this occasion of the fall of angels is a mere conjecture, yet it is the most probable I know of. And what makes it the more probable, it will account for Satan's great zeal for the destruction of mankind.

system being, by nature, immutable, but God alone. As it is written, "I am the Lord, I change not."

To be, by nature, immutable, is peculiar to the Deity, and cannot be communicated to a creature, because it implies infinity. God only is capable of such a complete view of all things, past, present, and to come, at once, as leaves no room for any new views. And his views being forever exactly the same, there is in his nature a fixed foundation for immutability in all his purposes and determinations. Whereas, the most exalted of all finite beings, being capable of only partial views of things, are constantly enlarging and varying their views and prospects, and are liable to have a set of thoughts wholly new, which may lead on to new determinations and purposes. And, amidst an infinite variety of new views, and new determinations, things may possibly so appear, as that the most exalted of mere creatures may make a wrong judgment, and take a wrong turn, and so fall into sin, and under the divine displeasure.

Wherefore, to God, who saw the finite capacities of finite intelligences, and their consequent liableness, as things might happen, to deception and apostasy, it plainly appeared, that he could not safely depend upon their stability. He knew himself to be the only immutable being in the system; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; but "he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly;" or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "He putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight." And yet, for things to continue forever in such an uncertain, unsettled state, must have been undesirable to the immutable Being who loves immutability in himself, and the image of it in his creatures; and loves to see his authority established, and his kingdom settled in peace and everlasting order and harmony; and loves to see the eternal welfare of his creatures on a safe footing, and clear out of the reach of any possible danger.

But how much soever to the honor of God, and to the good of the system, and how desirable soever, in these two respects, it might appear in the sight of God, that the intelligent system should unanimously adhere and cleave forever to the Lord, yet, in the nature of things, there could be no certain security for this, unless he himself, the only immutable being, should undertake and become surety for all his creatures. There could be no certain dependence upon creatures left to themselves, how great and excellent soever their original powers, because, after all, they were finite; and, therefore, must have new views, and so were liable to wrong determinations. God, who was

perfectly acquainted with the nature of himself, and of all created beings, plainly saw that himself alone was, by nature, absolutely immutable, and that all created intelligences must, after all their noble endowments and exalted stations, be absolutely dependent on him, not only for the continuation of their beings and original powers, but also for their preservation from sin and apostasy; as it is written, "There is none good but one, that is God."

2. However, innocent, holy beings, who as yet never felt the least inclination to swerve from God, but, on the contrary, were entirely wrapped up in him, could not easily perceive how it should be possible for them to turn away from the Deity, and become apostate; yea, such a thing would naturally appear to be impossible, as they felt no inclination that way, nor had in view any thing which seemed to be of the nature of a temptation to it. Nor was it possible they should feel an inclination to sin, while innocent; for the least motion of their hearts towards sin would constitute them sinners in the eyes of perfect purity. Nor was it possible they should feel any force in any temptation to sin, unless the temptation excited in them some inclination that way; for if they felt no inclination that way, then the temptation would appear to have no weight in it. If it weighed nothing with them, it would appear to have no weight in itself. So that, as long as they remained innocent, they could neither feel any inclination to sin, nor perceive any force in any temptation. Wherefore, it must be very unnatural to an innocent, holy being, to apprehend any danger of his ever turning from God. Nor could he easily be brought to know the mutability of his nature, or ever to imagine it could be in his heart to sin against God, unless left to find out the truth by his own sad experience.

Let any man attend to the constitution of his own mind, and he will soon perceive how unnatural it is to think ourselves in danger of a crime to which we never felt the least inclination, nor ever once thought of any thing in nature that could be a temptation; yea, to which, whenever we think of it, we feel the greatest aversion: as, what dutiful child ever thought himself in danger of murduring his father, whom he greatly loves and honors? And if a divinely-inspired prophet should tell him that he, one day, should be guilty of such a shocking crime, he could hardly believe it. This naturally brings to mind the story of Hazael, in 2 Kings viii. 11, 13, who, when the prophet told him how he should burn the strongholds of Israel, slay their young men with the sword, and dash their

children, and rip up their women with child, having never felt any inclination to such barbarities towards them, and not foreseeing any temptation he should ever have to commit such things, so shocking to human nature, readily answered, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" So, when our blessed Savior told Peter that he should deny him that very night, he was far from thinking it was in his heart to do so; nor could the prediction of Christ induce him to believe that it would come to pass. Yea, it did not seem to him there was really any danger of it, as he had no inclination that way; yea, felt the greatest aversion to it; and it did not seem that any thing could tempt him to it: no, not even death itself; for he felt he had rather die than to do it. "Although all should be offended, yet will not I. If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." And this was the voice of them all, though Christ had expressly told them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night;" and even confirmed his prediction by an ancient prophecy — "For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Much less would innocent, holy beings, who had never heard that any one intelligence had ever fallen, or ever discerned any thing in the state of their minds within, or in the situation of things without, that had the least tendency that way, but every thing to the contrary; — I say, much less would such beings be apt to suspect any danger of their forsaking the fountain of all good, and turning enemies to the God that made them. Nay, rather, I imagine, they would be apt to look upon it as a thing, in its own nature, near or quite impossible.* Therefore, —

3. If God, in a sense of their mutability, out of his own mere goodness and sovereign grace, to prevent their apostasy, and the infinitely dreadful consequences which, in a government so perfectly holy as his, sin must expose them to, all which lay open to his view; — I say, if God had become surety for all intelligences; if the only immutable being had, in such

* *Obj.* "The disciples were guilty of self-confidence, and were to blame. Surely holy beings have no blamable self-confidence."

Ans. They have not. The disciples might have known better. They had heard of the angels' fall, of Adam's fall, and of the falls of Noah, Lot, David, and other most eminent men; and had had abundant experience of the wickedness and deceitfulness of their own hearts, all which, together with Christ's express prediction, rendered them to blame. Yet it will not follow, that an innocent, holy being, just come into existence, full of love to God, having never heard of the fall of any, nor ever thought of any temptation to sin, is to blame, because it seems to him impossible, that ever he should turn enemy to the God that made him, or once go contrary to his will. "How can I do it?" would he be ready to say. "In all nature there is nothing to tempt me; but every thing to the contrary." And the more he loved God, the more impossible would it seem, that he should ever revolt.

circumstances, undertaken, by his ever-watchful eye, and the constant influences of his spirit, to have rendered all intelligences immutably good; although the kindness done them, in God's account, had been full infinitely great, yet not so in theirs; for they would not have been in a capacity to have discerned the kindness scarce at all; much less to have been so thoroughly sensible of their absolute dependence on God, and infinite obligations to him, as now, according to the present plan, the saved will forever be.

Had all intelligences been preserved in their original rectitude, and so never felt in themselves the least inclination to sin, but always perfectly to the contrary, they would have been apt to have thought it impossible that any holy being should ever depart from God; and so would not have been apt to have attributed their immutability to God, their preserver, but rather to their own inherent goodness; and so their absolute dependance on God, the only immutable being, and their infinite obligations to him, for interposing to prevent their apostasy, would not have been seen. Nor could they have had any proper sense of the self-moving goodness and sovereign grace of God, exercised towards them in this affair. In a word, God would not have been exalted so highly, nor would these intelligences have looked on themselves so infinitely beneath him: so dependent; so much obliged; nor would divine sovereign grace have stood in such a clear and striking point of light, as was really desirable. The truth would have lain, in a measure, concealed, beyond the reach of finite capacities, there being in nature no means provided, whereby they could have come to the clear and full knowledge of it. Therefore, —

4. They were not fit to be confirmed; nor would it have been to the honor of God to have confirmed them, as things stood. They were not prepared to feel that they stood in need of this super-creation grace, if I may so call it, not as yet knowing, nor, for aught appears, so much as suspecting, that they were in any danger. They stood firm within themselves, nor was there any thing in universal nature to draw them aside from God, as it seemed to them. And had God then interposed, it must have been to them an insensible interposition; of which they felt no need, and for which they were unprepared to be thankful.

If God had constantly preserved them from the first stirrings of an inclination to apostasy, as they had never heard of such a thing in all the system, or felt any tendency of heart that way, his interposition must have been undiscerned by them; nor could they have come to the knowledge of it, unless by

immediate revelation from God; which, as the case stood, they were unprepared to understand, or attend to, as not feeling any need of it. A revelation, in such a situation, would not have produced the desired effects. Nothing could teach them like experience. And, indeed, this is evidently the case so universally, that it is even become a proverb, that "Experience is the best schoolmaster;" so that it seems plain that intelligences, as they were at first created, were not in proper circumstances to be confirmed: nor could God have confirmed them, with that honor to himself that was desirable and fit.

For, if God, the only immutable being, of his own infinite goodness and sovereign grace, should show such a kindness to any of his creatures, it was fit and desirable that they should be thoroughly sensible of the greatness and freeness of his grace. The kindness done to a mutable, peccable creature, in such a case, as to the matter of it, must be of infinite worth; it being a confirmation in everlasting happiness. And as the kindness in confirming a peccable creature must be infinitely great, so the grace must be absolutely free. God had done so much for all intelligences in their first creation, that he was under no obligations to do any more. He was absolutely at liberty. He looked upon it in this light. And had he, to what he had originally done for them as their Creator, superadded confirming grace, that is, undertaken, as their guardian, to have been their constant keeper, and engaged his own immutability to have rendered them immutably good, the favor had been quite over and above what was due from the Creator to his creature; and so had been, in a peculiar sense, free. Now, for a favor, infinitely great, and so absolutely free, to be conferred in such a manner as that the greatness and freeness of it should never have been seen by intelligences, was neither for the honor of God nor for the best good of his creatures. And, —

5. It was but paying proper honor to the Deity, for God, as moral Governor of the world, to take state to himself, and in the sight of all created intelligences, to seat himself upon his throne, and proclaim his own infinite supremacy, and clothe himself with his proper authority, and let all know their infinite obligations to love, and honor, and obey him, on pain of his everlasting displeasure, and their everlasting banishment from his glorious presence. To have concerned himself only for his creatures' good, unsolicitous for the rights of the Godhead, in the very beginning of his reign, and when the first foundations of his everlasting kingdom were laying, had been to counteract his own nature, and his chief maxims of government.

And, indeed, as he is the Great Being, and in a sense, the only being, all the creation being nothing compared with him, yea, less than nothing, and vanity, so it was fit all intelligences should early be taught to view him in that light. And what method could be better suited to this end, than to let all the intelligent system know that their everlasting welfare was suspended on the condition of their paying supreme honor, and yielding constant obedience to this glorious Monarch of the universe; in the mean time leaving them to their own reflections, and to their own choice; as being conscious to himself of their infinite obligations to yield everlasting obedience to his law?

And if, in this state of things, any of his creatures should venture to rise in rebellion against his glorious majesty, the way would be open for him to take such steps as would have the most effectual tendency to discountenance sin; to exalt God, to humble the sinner, and glorify grace; and to prepare the way for the confirmation of innumerable multitudes of intelligences, in holiness and happiness, to the best advantage. All his gracious plan lay open before him. He knew, from step to step, how intelligences would conduct, and how he himself would interpose and overrule, and how the whole would finally issue. And he practically said, "Now shall it be known what is in their hearts. And occasion shall be given to show what is in my heart. And it shall be known that I am the Lord. And the whole intelligent system shall be filled with my glory." And, —

6. The state of things in the moral system was not such, immediately after the creation, as was suitable to the confirmation of intelligences in a way agreeable to the ends of moral government. God must have done all immediately, and without their so much as discerning their need of it; for there were, as yet, comparatively speaking, no means of confirmation. They had not had opportunity, in any instance, to see the infinitely evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin; nor did it yet appear what infinite abhorrence the Almighty had of iniquity, by any thing he had done; nor did they so much as know their danger, and their need of the divine interposition. Things, therefore, were by no means ripe for a general confirmation.

Indeed, God could have confirmed created intelligences then, but not in a way so agreeable to the ends of moral government as afterwards, that is, not so much to the honor of the moral Governor, and to the spiritual advantage of his creatures. When Satan, a glorious archangel, revolted, and drew off a

third part, perhaps, of the inhabitants of heaven; and when, for this sin, they were driven out from the presence of God, down to an eternal hell; and when the elect angels had stood by, and, with a perfect astonishment, beheld this unexpected revolt of their companions; and, with sacred dread, seen divine wrath blaze out from the eternal throne of heaven's almighty Monarch, driving the rebel host from those celestial regions, down to darkness and endless woes; and when the elect angels soon after saw our first parents turn away from God, and, for their sin, driven out of paradise, and all this lower world doomed to death; and when they had stood by three or four thousand years, and been spectators of the judgments inflicted by God on a wicked world; seen the general deluge; the miraculous destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven; the ten plagues of Egypt; the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; the carcasses of six hundred thousand Israelites fall in the wilderness, and the long series of calamities which God sent upon his people in the times of their judges, and in the reigns of their kings, till Israel and Judah were both carried away captive for their sins, and the glorious holy temple laid in ashes; and viewed all God's ways, even down to the birth and death of the Messiah, the most astonishing event that ever did, or ever will happen, throughout eternal ages; and beheld their sovereign Lord, who, in the beginning, had created the heaven and the earth, and whom, from their first existence, they had worshipped as the supreme God; as God over all, blessed forever, even him stepping into the room of apostate man, and dying in his stead, to make atonement for his sin; — I say, when the elect angels had stood by, for four thousand years, and seen all these things, and had full time for consideration, their thoughts of God, of themselves, of sin, would be almost infinitely different from what they were immediately after their creation. And now, if God should see cause to confirm them, that they might never fall, it would appear to them a kindness infinitely great and infinitely free. Their absolute dependence on God, and infinite obligations to him, and the infinite malignity of sin, would naturally be so deeply impressed on their hearts, by an attentive view of all these things, as would greatly tend to their everlasting confirmation; and prepare them to receive, with suitable gratitude, a kindness of such infinite value, at the hands of God.

The fall of their companions in holiness and happiness, and then of innocent man, would naturally lead them to see their own mutability, and make them feel their need of being held up by him, who is alone, by nature, unchangeable, and bring

them to an absolute dependence on him. God's permitting others to fall, as great and good as themselves, would naturally lead them to see that God was under no obligations to keep them through their time of trial, which would induce them to have recourse to sovereign grace, and be always on their watch. A sight of the infinitely dreadful state of Satan and his host, once their fellow-citizens, now bound in chains of guilt and despair, to the judgment of the great day, then, before all worlds, to be brought forth, judged, condemned, and doomed to the most intolerable pains of hell, never to end, would naturally tend to realize to them the horrible wickedness and dreadful nature of rising in rebellion against God, and make them tremble at the thought. And while they beheld all God's conduct towards mankind, from the fall of Adam to the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ, and looked forward to the final conflagration and consummation of all things, it would give them such a view of all God's moral perfections, shining forth in his moral government of the world, and set the infinitely evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin in such a light, as would have the strongest tendency to confirm them in everlasting love and obedience to the supreme Being, and dispose them to receive, at God's hands, a promise of their everlasting establishment, with the utmost gratitude.

The angels, who stood, being nowhere in Scripture denominated *elect*, until after the exaltation of Christ, some have thought they were held in a state of trial till then; when, by their confirmation, God's eternal designs of love towards them were manifested. And it is certain, that when they had been spectators of all God's works in heaven, earth, and hell, through so long a period, must be in almost an infinitely better capacity to receive confirmation than immediately after their creation: and their confirmation now would be infinitely more to God's honor than if it had been granted at their first existence; and their own humility, holiness, and happiness, be increased a hundred, or a thousand, or perhaps ten thousand fold. Therefore,—

7. On supposition that a third part were fallen and lost, yet it is easy to see how there may be eternally more holiness and happiness in the angelic world, than if sin and misery had been forever unknown: for if their holiness and happiness be only a hundred times greater now, on the present plan, than otherwise it would have been, and if we allow for the happiness Satan and his adherents lost, and for the misery which they undergo, yet what remains must be many millions more in the

whole, than it otherwise would have been.* And only let us realize what must have been the reflections of the holy angels, from time to time, as new scenes have opened to their view, and what their reflections must eternally be, when they have seen God's grand plan finished at the day of judgment; and we cannot doubt but that their humility, holiness, and happiness will be augmented at least a hundred fold.

1. Reflections of the elect angels on the unreasonable rebellion, the unexpected fall, the everlasting punishment of Satan and his legions, once their companions in bliss.

"How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning, from standing near the throne of God, into an eternal hell! Yesterday joining with us in the songs of heaven; now under the everlasting displeasure of God, banished to endless woe!

"How durst you rise in rebellion against heaven's glorious Monarch; and how infinitely vile the shocking deed! What more reasonable than to pay supreme honor to the Supreme Being, and to be in subjection to the Author and Lord of all things, to whom the throne belongs, and exult in his supremacy, and rejoice in him, and in his government; or what more vile

* The truth of this may be easily seen, thus: Suppose the number of angels to be *three*; and all remaining innocent to have one degree of holiness and happiness apiece; the sum total would be three degrees of holiness and happiness. But if one falls, and the other two increase in holiness and happiness a hundred fold, then the sum total of holiness and happiness will be two hundred degrees. But if the misery of the damned is augmented in the same proportion as the happiness of the blessed, then the misery of one lost angel will be one hundred degrees; besides the happiness he lost, which was supposed to be one degree. Now, therefore, subtract one hundred and one from two hundred, and the remainder will be ninety-nine; that is, there will be ninety-nine degrees of happiness left. And if this will be the case, were the number of the angels supposed to be three, it will also, proportionably, in any given number. So that, if there are but half so many good angels, as there are now supposed to be of mankind inhabiting the earth, yet the clear gain will be above ninety-six hundred millions of degrees of happiness more than if all had stood, as will appear from the following table.

N. B. The number of the present inhabitants of the earth is supposed to be 729,000,000. I will suppose the number of good angels to be only 300,000,000, which is less than half.

If all had stood.		On the present plan.	
Number of angels supposed.	Proportionable degrees of HAPPINESS.	Number of angels supposed.	Proportionable degrees of HAPPINESS.
3	3	3	99 . . . . .
30	30	30	990 . . . . .
300	300	300	9900 . . . . .
300,000,000 . .	300,000,000 . .	300,000,000 . .	9,900,000,000 . .
		From	9,900,000,000
		Subtract	300,000,000
		Remainder,	9,600,000,000 clear gain.

and ungrateful, than to turn enemies to the great Being, the Author, Proprietor, and Governor of all created intelligences, and to attempt to overturn all order and harmony in the system? For such exalted intelligences, in such a happy situation, under such great obligations to the Deity for bounties already received, attended with the prospect of endless joys in his presence, to rise in rebellion thus! No wonder heaven's Almighty Monarch, in regard to his own honor and the good of his kingdom, has banished them from his presence, and destined them to be everlasting monuments of his wrath.

"But, O, how unexpected, surprising, and shocking, are these dreadful scenes! And is it so? And are they fallen! Who could have thought it? Such holy beings to rise in rebellion against infinite holiness! So good a taste for order and harmony, and yet have broke the orders of Heaven! So strong inducements, from duty and interest, to persevere, that one would have thought such an apostasy quite impossible. And are they fallen? forever fallen and lost?

"And what are we? Were we better than they? Or did we stand firmer? Or were we more out of danger? Or more on our watch? No, in no wise. It once seemed impossible we should fall; but now we are surprised to see we stand. And, O, who knows what another day may bring forth. We are as likely to be in hell to-morrow, as they were yesterday. God is no more obliged to keep us than he was them. And what if we should fall! O, how dreadful, how infinitely dreadful, the thought! We will all go and fall prostrate before the throne of the great Immutable; and cry, — O, Father of our spirits, of thy sovereign grace, keep us, we humbly pray thee, — nor will we ever forget what we have seen; nor will we ever cease to watch and pray."

2. Reflections of the elect angels on the temptation of Satan, and the fall of man.

"O, the hellish pride, and spite, and malice of Satan, once our companion in bliss! How gladly would he ruin the whole system, were it in his power, and even overturn the throne of heaven's eternal King! How wicked a deed hath man committed, and how righteous the doom of our glorious monarch! All who rebel against him deserve to be turned out of his world, and lie under his everlasting displeasure. But what an infinite weight of displeasure doth Satan deserve! We rejoice, the Almighty hath decreed to bruise his head, and frustrate all his schemes, and bring salvation to man. We rejoice, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and will forever reign.

"O thou, who only art immutable, behold, man is fallen.

We prostrate ourselves at thy feet. O, keep us, of thy mere sovereign goodness, we most earnestly and humbly do beseech thee. We claim no right to such a favor. Our fellow-creatures in heaven, and now on earth, are fallen. Thy throne is guiltless. But, O thou Father of spirits, keep us, of thy mere sovereign grace, through our state of trial, to the everlasting honor of thy great name; that, through eternal ages, we may celebrate thy praises. In the revelation of thy designs of mercy towards fallen man, we see the infinite goodness of thy nature, and that thou canst have mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy, and at the same time secure the honor of thy government. We flee to thy sovereign goodness for preserving grace; nor will we ever forget what we have seen, nor will we cease to watch and pray."

3. Reflections of the elect angels on the death of Christ — attentive spectators on this solemn occasion, no doubt, although invisible to the surrounding, insulting multitude.

"This is He who brought the universe into existence, and is worshipped by all the hosts of heaven! This is he who appeared to Abraham and to Moses; gave the law on Mount Sinai, and dwelt in the Jewish temple; then in the form of God, now in the form of a servant; Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews! And this gives us higher conceptions of the divine goodness, than ever before entered into our hearts; that after mankind had continued four thousand years in obstinate rebellion, and given millions of instances of an inveterate enmity against our Almighty Sovereign, yet he can thus freely give his Son to die for them! But O the hellish temper of the surrounding crowds, insulting the Son of God in his last agonies! Pushed on by Satan, who knows what they are doing, although they do not. And thus Satan will treat the God who made him. This is his heart. O, what is there he would not do, had he power on his side. No wonder he is doomed to eternal woes. Hell is his proper place. And such might we now have been, if God had left us to fall when they did. O the sovereign grace of God to us! Preserved to this day in our integrity. O the dreadful nature of sin! O the ruined state of a guilty world, seduced by Satan, should justice take place! But here hangs their expiatory sacrifice; the Son of God dying in their room! The whole intelligent system now sees how God hates sin; and how resolved he is, as Governor of the universe, to bear ample testimony against it. Not one of the guilty race of Adam will he pardon, unless his Son die in their stead. The greatness of the atonement shows how great he thinks the crime. If all the angelic world had been

offered as a sacrifice of atonement, it had been infinitely beneath this; yea, compared with this, it had been nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity. O the infinite evil of sin! O the infinite greatness of God! How does the death of his Son show him to be infinitely exalted! None fit to mediate between him and sinful men, but his Son; nor any blood precious enough to make atonement but his. Nor can Satan, under all his woes, through eternal ages, ever once think that he is punished in a sovereign, despotic, arbitrary manner; much less can such a thought ever enter into our hearts in heaven, while we behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and remember how he was treated by his Father, when once he stood in the room of sinners. Nay, now we are more fully convinced than ever, that sin really deserves the eternal punishment which God will inflict. O the infinite evil of rising in rebellion against the infinitely glorious and almighty Monarch of the universe, the Maker and Lord of all! O, what an infinite kindness, that God has kept us from this infinite evil! Our obligations to him, how are they infinitely increased! And, after all this, for us ever to turn apostates; O, how unutterably dreadful, quite infinitely dreadful, the thought! If, when the Son of God arises from the dead, ascends to heaven, and sits down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and becomes head over all the saved from among men, in whom they will be forever safe, whose immutability will render them immutable in goodness forever, — O, if he might become our head too! How infinitely great would be the favor of God in this! Nor should we ever forget the freeness of God's grace."*

* And if, on the exaltation of Christ, the elect angels were confirmed, it is easy to see how they would naturally be a thousand, if not a million, times more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the goodness and grace of God exercised towards them, than if they and all others had been immediately confirmed at their first existence. That Christ is to be head of angels, as well as of saints, seems to be intimated in Eph. i. 10 — "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." And perhaps the confirmation of the elect angels is what the apostle refers to, in Col. i. 19, 20 — "For it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." And it is certain that they receive great instruction from God's works here on earth. They behold the whole earth full of the glory of the Lord. (Isai. vi. 3.) And it is certain God designed they should, and that he has ordered things as he has, to the intent "that unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." And it is equally certain they are very attentive; for these are things which "the angels desire to look into." And they have the best advantages for a large acquaintance with these things, as they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. i. 14) And they deeply interest themselves in all God's dispensations towards the church on earth, as is

4. Reflections of the elect angels on the destruction of Antichrist, and on the millennium.

"Now at length an end is come to the long series of mischief which hath been wrought by that furious dragon, that subtle old serpent, once a glorious angel, now of long time a devil. Behold, he is bound, and shut up, and can deceive the nations no more. Behold, Babylon the great is fallen; is fallen. Hallelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments. Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. And, lo! all his foes fall before him, unable to resist: and the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And now Christ shall reign on earth a thousand years, and all nations shall serve him, and all the people shall be holy, and all shall know him, from the least to the greatest; and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the seas, till the saved of the Lord be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand on the sea-shore, innumerable. Hallelujah!

"This grand event, which, to Satan, is matter of so great confusion and anguish, is to us matter of the greatest joy. And yet once Satan and his hosts were all of our number, and we sang the praises of God together. O the surprising change sin hath wrought! O the distinguishing grace of God, which kept us from falling, too, on that dreadful day of Satan's revolt! a day by us never to be forgotten. Now Satan lies chained in the bottomless pit, and we are in triumph on the occasion around the throne."

5. On Christ's second coming. "Behold, he cometh in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him shall mourn; and the bold and haughty, who once bid him defiance, shall call to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and cover them; the crush of mountains being less dreadful than the wrath of the Lamb. And now shall the scene close, and the ways of God to men and angels be all justified. And God shall receive glory from all his works.

"See, yonder cometh Satan, with all his guilty host, trembling, to appear before the bar. O, never let us forget the day when they sang the praises of God with us before the throne. How surprised were we at their unexpected revolt! We then little thought what was before us; little guessed what was in the creature's heart, or in God's heart. But now we have seen

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evident from the book of the Revelation throughout. And they will attend Jesus Christ when he comes to judge the world, and God's grand plan finished, and things in God's kingdom brought to a final settlement. (Matt. xxv. 31, 46.)

both; and now we see the result. God is exalted, his authority established; Satan and his host are conquered, and are now to be sent away into everlasting punishment. And, but for the distinguishing grace of God, which has always held us up, we might now have been as they now are. No heart can conceive, no tongue can express, the infinite obligations we are under to God; of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom belongs glory forever and ever. Amen.

"Now, therefore, let eternal ages be, by us all, employed in contemplating God's glorious works; in admiring the wisdom of all his ways; revering the dread majesty of the universe; magnifying and extolling his great name; exulting in his supremacy, and celebrating the praises of his free and boundless goodness."

It is easy to see how natural it must be for the elect angels to make these and such like reflections on these occasions. And it is as easy to see how the knowledge of God, and of themselves, increases their humility; their dependence on God; their reverence, love, gratitude, and joy, that is, their holiness and happiness. And it is easy to see how the fall of angels and men, and God's conduct on these occasions, gives them these new ideas of themselves and of God. Had sin and misery never entered into God's world, they could never have had these ideas of themselves, or of God. And, if what has been said of the angels may be applied to mankind, as for substance we see it may, and that, too, with some additional circumstances of great weight, as will appear in the next sermon, then this will be the sum of the argument. So clear and so adequate an idea of God and themselves could not have been obtained by finite intelligences, through eternal ages, had sin and misery never entered into God's world.

But the more clear and adequate their idea of God and themselves, the more humble, holy, and happy will the inhabitants of heaven be, and the more will God be exalted. And that in such a superior degree, as that more honor will redound to God, and more humility, holiness, and happiness, be in the system, than if sin and misery had been forever unknown.

Now, if God's present plan is in the best manner suited to honor God, and to increase the humility, holiness, and happiness of the system, then is his wisdom vindicated; for wisdom consists in proposing the best ends, and choosing the best means for their accomplishment. And thus God's conduct, in his grand plan, is analogous to his conduct in the four instances mentioned in the first sermon; and the same reasons which vindicate his wisdom in them, vindicate him in this.

THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON IV.

YE THOUGHT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT UNTO GOOD.
Genesis l. 20.

IF the Holy Scriptures are read over, and viewed in the character of a narrative, we shall find the history of the Deity, and the history of human nature, interwoven throughout, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation; filling up by far the greatest part of those sacred pages. Here we shall see the bright and glorious character of the Deity, drawn in a most lively and striking manner, in an authentic account written by God's own direction, of his conduct from the beginning of the world; and, at the same time, human nature painted to the life, in the behavior of mankind through a long succession of ages; and this book God puts into our hands as the best means to form us to views and tempers suitable to the heavenly world. And why? Why such a book, for such an end? Plainly, because the knowledge of God and ourselves is of the last importance to the holiness and happiness of that world. And, indeed, on our strictest researches into things, we shall find that our highest moral rectitude, perfection, and happiness, must arise from, and consist in, an enlarged, clear, lively view of God and ourselves, and an answerable frame of heart. Let us view God as he is, and ourselves as we be, as nearly in the same light that God does, as our finite capacities will admit, and have an unanswerable frame of heart, and we are at the top of that moral perfection and happiness we are capable of. And if, therefore, God's great and universal plan is so contrived, as to put intelligences under the best possible advantages for this, then it is the best plan possible. We have before entered on this glorious theme. And let these things be now considered for the further illustration of the subject.

1. Nothing can be known of God, by created intelligences, be their taste for divine knowledge ever so good, and their capacities ever so great, any further than God manifests himself; for it is beyond the power of any finite intelligence to look immediately into God's heart, as we can into our own, and view and contemplate the divine perfections as they are in the divine essence. Yea, we can have no idea at all of the divine essence; yea, we can have no idea even of the essence of our own souls. The utmost we can do, by way of immediate intuition, is to perceive our thoughts, and thence discern the habitual inclinations of our hearts. And if we could look into God's essence, and see all his thoughts, we might thence learn his nature, without any manifestation whatsoever. We might know God's heart by immediate intuition, as we can our own. But this is absolutely impossible. We cannot look into the hearts of our fellow-creatures; much less can we into God's heart. Neither God's thoughts, nor any of his views, nor any of his designs, could ever have been known, had he given no manner of manifestation of himself. Those thoughts and purposes in his heart, which he has not manifested, cannot be found out; greatness of genius is no help in this case. Sir Isaac Newton could not tell when the day of judgment would be, sooner than the greatest idiot. Yea, as God had not revealed it, so "of that day and hour knew no man; no, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father only." Even the man Christ Jesus, now in his exalted state in heaven, cannot look into the divine essence, and see the secret thoughts in God's heart. If he comes to the knowledge of these secrets, it is by divine communication, as is plain from Rev. i. 1,—"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God *gave* unto him." And if the most exalted creature, by immediate intuition, cannot look into God's heart, so much as to discern one single thought, then nothing can be known of God in this way. In a word, neither the being of God, nor more nor less of any of his perfections, could ever have been known, had there been absolutely no evidence at all of his being, or of any of his perfections; but no evidence ever was had, or ever can be had, in this case, but what originally comes from him; therefore nothing can be known of God any further than he, some how or other, makes it evident to his creatures; which is what I mean by his manifesting himself. Therefore, —

2. As all the ideas of God, which are according to truth, in the whole intelligent system, originally flow from the manifestation which he makes of himself; so the more clearly and fully he manifests himself, the greater advantages will there eternally

be to make swift progress in knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness. Intelligences, who are finite, can never have an adequate idea of Him who is infinite. Their knowledge may increase, and their views brighten eternally. And the greater their advantages are, the swifter will be their progress, supposing their taste for divine knowledge to be good. He that is now the lowest, may, millions of ages hence, be much higher in attainments than he that is now the highest among all the heavenly hosts. Meanwhile, those glorious chiefs may be still advanced, almost infinitely, before them. But, while all ranks in heaven are thus rising in the knowledge of God, and in all divine attainments eternally rising, yet they can never comprehend Him who is infinite. He is still infinitely above them; and they are as nothing and vanity, compared with him. Their conviction of this will eternally increase; and so their humility eternally grow; and God be forever exalted higher and higher in their view which will cause their love to his glorious majesty, joy in his supremacy, and happiness in him and in his government, forever to augment. And if their progress will be in proportion to their advantages, that is, in proportion to the manifestations God makes of himself, then the fuller and brighter the divine manifestations, the swifter their progress. Of two intelligences, of equal taste and capacity, it is possible that one, by having a thousand times greater advantages, may make a thousand times greater proficiency than the other, in the same time. Let an intelligence, of equal taste and capacity with the angel Gabriel, be created on the morning of the day of judgment, and be placed in some remote parts of infinite space, at a distance from the whole present creation, and spend that day in solitary contemplation, without any advantages to gain the knowledge of God, but what must necessarily result from its own existence and powers; and let Gabriel, the same day, descend from heaven with Christ, and be a spectator of all the transactions of that solemn season; and it is easy to see that Gabriel must gain a thousand, or ten thousand, or rather, perhaps, a million times more knowledge of the nature of God, the moral Governor of the world, than that solitary spirit. So Moses, in about six months, namely, from the time he saw the burning bush, to the end of the twice forty days he was on Mount Sinai, doubtless gained more knowledge of God than he had all his life long before, that is, more in six months than in eighty years.

As God has formed finite intelligences capable of improvements through eternal ages, so it is reasonable to expect that he will provide those who shall be the objects of his everlast-

ing favor, with the best advantages to make a swift progress; and that plan will, in this respect, be judged the best that is most suited to this end. That plan, therefore, of all possible plans, must in this respect be the best, in which is given the fullest and the brightest manifestation of all the divine perfections. But, —

3. The apostasy of angels and men has given the moral Governor of the universe an opportunity to set all his moral perfections in the clearest and most striking point of light; and, as it were, to open all his heart to the view of finite intelligences.

The whole intelligent system now may see what God thinks to be his due from his creatures, and how jealous he is of the rights of the Godhead, and how resolved to maintain the honor of his authority and government. And now the whole system may see, too, that as he is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the original proprietor of all things, so he thinks it belongs to him, without the advice or leave of his creatures, according to the counsel of his own will, to lay out that plan which seems best in his own eyes; and to do what he thinks best to do; and to forbear what he thinks best to forbear; to bring such intelligences into being as he thinks best; and having said and done what he thinks best, to forbear to say or do any more, and stand by, and let them take their course, practically saying, "They owe themselves to me: I owe them nothing." And if they fall, he holds himself at liberty to proceed with and punish them strictly according to law, without any mitigation, the law being exactly right; so that it is matter of mere sovereign grace to grant relief to any; a thing he may do, or not do, as he pleases, for aught he owes to them. Yea, he holds himself bound to do nothing for their relief, but in a way that shall be honorable to his law. Nevertheless, while he shows such a steady regard to his own honor, and so inflexibly adheres to the rights of the Godhead, as, by office, he is bound, being moral Governor of the universe; at the same time the whole system may see, too, that his goodness is as boundless as his nature. But, then, he loves his creatures should know how the case really stands; that the rights of the Godhead ought not to be given up, and that the exercises of his goodness are absolutely free; that while they view things in the same light he does, they may feel as he thinks it is fit they should in such a case.* But time would fail to hint at the various ideas of

* Unless property be known and acknowledged between man and man, and the boundaries fixed, there can be no room for the exercise of generosity. If my estate is none of mine, then it is not mine to give. If my neighbor may come

himself, which he has communicated in consequence of the grand apostasy of angels and men. Indeed, he has given materials for contemplation, that a whole eternity cannot exhaust.

The picture of himself, which God has given, and will give, in his conduct, from the fall of angels to the final consummation of all things, is gloriously full and complete. He has been called to act in an infinite variety of cases; and, to speak of him according to the language of Scripture in the most trying circumstances, (read Ezek. xx. 5—22,) he has been tempted and tried, not merely forty years in the wilderness, by the Israelites, but from the beginning of the world to this day, by every nation, kindred, language, and tongue; and has had opportunity to show his heart, by his conduct, in all the infinite variety of cases which have ever happened among the millions and millions of millions of subjects which he had to deal with. All which, together with all that remains to be accomplished to the end of the world, will be brought into view another day, and serve to make the picture of himself, which he has given, very full, and gloriously complete in the eyes of all holy intelligences.

Besides, his great work, to which all his other works bear some respect, is so much like himself, that, in a manner, it gives his whole picture at once. An incarnate God on the cross, if the divine views, motives, and ends, are all considered, is a piece of conduct, of which it may be said, as it was of Him that was chief actor in this affair, It is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person. To create a world was but a small matter with the Almighty. With a word he could bring system after system into being with infi-

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and take what and when he pleases, then I have no right to withhold any thing. My neighbor may justly think hardly of me if I do; and will not thank me if I do not. But if I have any thing which I call my own, and to which my neighbor has no right, then he must acknowledge, notwithstanding any claim he has to make, I may do what I will with that; as the householder, in the parable, said, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" And if my neighbor views my property in the same light that I do, then he will be apt to view my generosity in the same light too; and what I offer as a free gift, he will receive and acknowledge as such; and feel as is fit. And it was absolutely necessary that property should be known and acknowledged, and the boundaries fixed between God and his creatures. And God, by the law he gave to his creatures, as soon as created, and by his conduct since, has effectually done it; has plainly said what was due from them to him; and as plainly declared that he owed them nothing. And these boundaries set up by God, were they but acceded to and acquiesced in by man, the chief matters of controversy between God and man would be removed, and things would look fair for a reconciliation. But while man denies his debt to God, and makes large demands on the Deity, there is no hope of an accommodation; for God will demolish the universe sooner than give up his just rights, in favor of his rebellious creatures. (Matt. v. 17.)

nite ease. But the work of redemption, by the death of his Son, seems to be a work equal with himself, and in which he has expressed all his heart.*

Actions speak louder than words. The divine conduct sets his picture in a more striking, affecting point of light, than any mere verbal descriptions could have done, had there been no opportunity for conduct. When the Almighty actually banished the sinning angels from his presence, down to eternal darkness and woe, it set his character in a much stronger light, in the eyes of the elect angels, than his previous threatening had done. And when the day of judgment actually comes, and the whole system are assembled to see and hear, and give up their account, and receive their sentence, it will be much more real than ever it was before made to any of God's creatures, by any descriptions or imaginations they ever had. And it will set the divine perfections in a light proportionably clear, striking, and affecting.

Had all things gone on still and quiet in God's kingdom, there had been no occasion or opportunity for these works, by which all will know that he is the Lord, and the whole system be filled with his glory.

Had the posterity of Abraham lived quietly in the land of Canaan, and multiplied there for four hundred and seventy years, the Canaanites dying off meanwhile, as the Indians do in America, they might have filled the land with a much greater number of inhabitants, than when Joshua brought them in; and no Joseph sold; no infants drowned; no making bricks; no carcasses left in the wilderness, and they strangers to such great changes, trials, and sorrows; but then God would not have had an opportunity for any of those wonderful works which he wrought, whereby it was known that he was the Lord, and the whole earth was filled with his glory, and a foundation laid for much good to that people, then, and in all succeeding generations; yea, to this day, the whole church of God reap the benefit of those wonderful works which were

* The Scripture informs us of no created intelligence besides angels and men; much less does it attempt to raise our devotion by a contemplation of millions of globes inhabited besides this our earth. But, according to Scripture, the work of redemption is God's great work; and from this, chiefly, we are to learn his moral character; and this are we to contemplate, with the other branches of his moral government, as revealed in the Bible. And that love and devotion, which arises from these scriptural views of God and his works, is the scriptural devotion, and infinitely preferable to imaginary transports. If our views of the works of creation, providence, and redemption, are according to Scripture, we need not raise millions of imaginary systems of intelligences to inflame our hearts with a divine fervor; nor have we the example of one saint in the Bible to justify such an attempt.

recorded for our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are to come.

So, had sin been forever unknown in the system, there would have been no opportunity for the mighty works which God has wrought since the day he drove the apostate angels out of heaven, and our first parents out of paradise, and will yet work to the end of time, and final consummation of all things. All which, put together, will give the most full and complete, the most clear and striking picture, of the divine nature, for the contemplation and instruction of the inhabitants of heaven, through eternal ages.

4. While God forbears to interpose and hinder the apostasy of finite intelligences, being absolutely unobliged to say or do any more than he had said and done; and while, being left to their own free choice, a number of the angels in heaven, and man upon earth, rebel; and, being left to themselves, all the fallen angels, and great numbers of fallen men, go on in their rebellion, acting out their hearts, and exhibiting their picture in their conduct, through a long succession of ages; they plainly show what all finite intelligences in heaven and on earth might have come to, if they had not been prevented by the mere free grace of the only immutable Being. Meanwhile, God, as has been said, in his conduct, sets his own character in the clearest and fullest light. And so all holy intelligences will, through eternal ages, have the advantages of these two complete pictures; the picture that God has exhibited of himself, and the picture which fallen creatures have exhibited of themselves, to assist them to a clear view and realizing sense of what God is, and of what they might have been. Just as the pious Jews in the earthly Canaan, when they reviewed the conduct of God towards their forefathers, and their conduct towards him, had the picture of each before their eyes, for their instruction, from age to age. Which leads me to another thought: —

5. At the end of these forty years, Moses assembles the whole congregation of Israel in the plains of Moab; and, that they might be under the better advantages to reap the benefit of all past transactions, now just as they are entering into the holy land, he rehearses all God's conduct towards them, and all their conduct towards him, and labors deeply to impress a sense of both on their hearts; so, at the final consummation of all things, the whole intelligent system will be assembled, and all past things be opened; all God's conduct towards his creatures, and all their conduct towards him; and that in such a manner as will make the deepest impressions on all that great assembly.

But as this will be a most solemn day, and perhaps the most important day that ever did or ever will happen, and a day on which great light will be given to God's universal plan; so it may not be amiss to stop here awhile, and consider who is to be the judge; and who shall be present in that great assembly; and what will be brought into view; and what will be the final sentence pronounced on the wicked; and what will be the visible consequence; and what the state of the righteous when all is over; and what must be their reflections upon the whole.

1. The Messiah, the Son of God, the seed of the woman, will be the judge. So great was his zeal for the honor of God, and concern for the salvation of lost sinners, that he offered to undertake to frustrate Satan's scheme; and, on the cross, at the expense of his life, he entirely disconcerted the plan the devil had laid, and sapped the foundation of his kingdom; opening a way, in which glory might come to God, and salvation to fallen man; which so pleased the eternal Father, that he gave him for his reward the very thing his heart was chiefly set upon — even full power and authority completely to accomplish his design. Messiah took the throne, and, at the head of the universe, conducted all things from that day and forward, with his end in constant view, till Satan's kingdom was destroyed, and he had reigned on earth a thousand years. And having seen of the travail of his soul to his satisfaction, in the recovery of a great multitude of the human race, a multitude like the stars of heaven, and as the sands on the sea-shore innumerable, now he comes to cause strict justice to take place on all the obstinate adherents to Satan's interest. Behold, he cometh in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him, and the fatal, the finishing stroke shall be laid full on the old serpent's head; which shall be done in the most public manner; for, —

2. The whole intelligent system shall be present. The holy angels, once Satan's companions in heaven, shall now descend in glory and joy, attending the righteous Judge. And with them the saints shall come from the upper world, and receive their bodies, glorious and immortal, raised by their almighty Savior. Meanwhile, the saints on earth shall be changed, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then earth and sea, death and hell, shall give up their dead; and all kindreds, nations, languages, and tongues, shall be gathered to the bar. And Satan and his hosts, who of a long time have been in chains, reserved to the judgment of the great day, shall be forced, guilty and trembling, to stand forth in the sight of the whole creation.

3. And now, the history of the grand rebellion shall be opened to the view of the whole intelligent creation, from the day of Satan's first revolt; his expulsion from heaven, and seduction of the human kind, with all his views and motives, ends and designs, and the methods by him taken from the foundation of his kingdom on earth, to its final destruction; and how apostate men have heartily joined in his interest; and both, as it were, combined together to defeat the designs of the Redeemer.

The blood of the martyrs will be brought into the account, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of the last martyr that shall be slain, to evidence the obstinate malice of Satan and his adherents; who, rather than that the Redeemer's kingdom should be set up, have shed rivers of human blood. Yea, the Son of God himself has been put to death in this apostate world.

All the conduct of the human race before the flood, and how their wickedness brought on the general deluge; and all the conduct of mankind since, together with the methods of divine grace from the beginning of the world; particularly the calling of Abraham, and all the glorious methods of divine grace with his seed, from age to age, till the coming of the Messiah; together with their perverse conduct in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the holy land; their killing the prophets, and stoning those who were sent unto them, and finally crucifying the Son of God, and obstinately rejecting his glorious gospel; and the calling of the Gentiles into the Christian church; their loathness to leave their idols; the bloody work they made among the primitive professors of Christianity, together with a history of the rise, and progress, and dreadful deeds of the grand anti-Christian apostasy, will all be laid open to public view, in the sight of the creation. And not only these great affairs, but also all the conduct of particular sinners, in every age, with every secret thing, shall be brought to light on that great day.

And while Messiah appears in all his Father's glory, the reasonableness of God's law, and the infinite grace of the gospel, will, by his very presence, be brought into such a clear view, in the eyes of all that great assembly, as will not only strike the fallen angels, who have been inveterate enemies to the righteous government of God, and constant opposers of the gracious designs of the Redeemer, into the utmost guilt and confusion; but also overwhelm, with inexcusable guilt and self-condemning reproaches, all the lost sons of Adam, of every nation under heaven. The Gentile will now feel himself without excuse, for breaking the law of nature, (Rom. i. 20,)

and the Jew and the Christian much more, who have sinned against greater light, and despised infinite grace: so that every mouth will be stopped, and all Satan's adherents from among the human race, will stand guilty before God. (Rom. iii. 19.) For, when the Lord cometh with all his heavenly attendants, to execute judgment upon obstinate enemies, he will convince all, and silence all, who have justified themselves, and spoken many "hard speeches against him;" for that shall not only be a day of wrath, but of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Meanwhile, all holy intelligences will be fully prepared cordially to approve, yea, heartily to rejoice in the final sentence of the Judge; the forethought of which dreadful sentence will fill Satan, and all his mighty potentates, with terror unutterable. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," who had met armies in the field of battle, and looked death in the face undaunted, "and every bond-man, and every free-man," shall wish to "hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains;" yea, they will wish the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

4. He shall pronounce the sentence, *Depart, ye cursed;* to which all the holy angels and saints, with divine and sacred fervor, will say, *Amen, Hallelujah.*

5. And no sooner will the sentence be pronounced, but they shall visibly "go away into everlasting punishment;" for God, who foresaw their apostasy and final wickedness, before the creation of the world, did in the creation provide proper materials by which "to show his wrath, and make his power known," and give an eternal image of his infinite hatred of sin, in the sight of the whole intelligent system; for all the starry heavens, and this earth, are reserved to that purpose, laid up in store as fuel, "reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." And the heavens shall then "pass away with a great noise," rushing together into one general heap; "for the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements," of which they are composed, "shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also," involved in the general ruin, "and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." And so the whole material system shall form one immense lake of fire and brimstone, where the heat shall be almost infinitely intense, in which the damned shall weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth forever. For their worm shall never die, and the fire shall never be quenched; (2 Pet. iii. 7, 12. Mark ix. 44;) and all this open to the view, eternally open to the view of all the inhabitants of heaven; for "they shall be tormented with

fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And this great fire will eternally be a visible emblem of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, "to show his wrath and make his power known." As when Pharaoh and his hosts were overwhelmed in the Red Sea, in sight of all the Israelites, the God of the Hebrews showed his power, and caused his name to be declared throughout all the earth, (Exod. ix. 16;) so now, when Satan and all his adherents from an apostate world are cast into this lake of fire and brimstone, to be tormented day and night, forever and ever, it will "show God's wrath, and make his power known," in the sight of the whole intelligent system.

6. The grand rebellion in the intellectual system being brought to this issue by Messiah, the prince, whose name is "King of kings, and Lord of lords," and an end put to this visible creation, in which so much sin has been committed, now doomed to eternal fire, Messiah, with the angels, his attendants, and with the saved from among men, in number like the sands on the sea-shore, shall ascend to the heavenly Zion with singing, and enter into everlasting joys.

For, as the Messiah loved his church, when she lay polluted in her blood, and gave himself for her, and redeemed her from the earth, and washed her in his own blood, and made her a glorious church, and adorned her as a bride is adorned for her husband; so now the marriage of the Lamb shall be celebrated before all the inhabitants of heaven; and she shall be called "the bride, the Lamb's wife." The saved shall be taken into the nearest union and most beatific communion with Jesus Christ; who will rejoice over them as the fruit of his labors; as the travail of his soul; as the joy that was set before him. Even "as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so will he rejoice over them." And he will rejoice and joy in them. (Isai. lxv. 19.) And rest in his love. (Zeph. iii. 17.) And thus they shall be forever with the Lord; shall be where he is, and behold his glory. And God will be their God, and wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. All temptations and trials are at an end; forever out of the reach of Satan, sin, and danger. All things are made new; are put upon a new footing, not as in the first creation, when all finite intelligences were put on trial, and left to stand or fall for themselves, God unobliged to hold them up, in consequence whereof sin entered into heaven and earth; whereas, in this new heaven and earth, there shall be no sin; but in them

'dwelleth righteousness." Christ will eternally be the head of all holy intelligences, and his immutability be their eternal security. (Eph. i. 10.) So they shall possess this good land which flows with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands, of which the earthly Canaan was a type: I say, they shall possess it forever.

7. And upon the whole, what must be the reflections of angels and saints, in those happy regions of light, love, peace, and eternal contemplation? What must the elect angels think, while they recollect the day of their creation, when Satan and all his hosts stood with them, and bowed and worshipped before the throne; and remember his foul revolt, his expulsion from heaven, his attempts to dishonor God, and get himself adored in an apostate world; and now view his eternal overthrow, chained to the burning lake forever and ever?

And what must be the reflections of Adam, Abel, Enoch, and Noah; of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and of all the prophets, apostles, and martyrs; and of all the saved, in every age of the world, and from every nation, language, and tongue, under heaven, while they recollect the original apostasy of mankind, and the whole history of all the conduct of an apostate world, from the fall of Adam to the day of judgment, as lately laid before the tribunal of Christ; and remember their own former awful temper and dreadful state while secure in sin, running in full career to hell; and consider how they were pitied and redeemed by an incarnate God, and stopped and reclaimed by sovereign grace, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; but for which they not only might, but certainly would, have been in the same infinitely dreadful condition they now behold others in, once their neighbors and companions, chained among devils to the burning lake.

As the pious Israelites, when quietly settled in the earthly Canaan, would naturally call to mind the day when they were bondmen in the land of Egypt, and the Egyptian manners and the idolatrous customs in which they were educated; and how they had forgotten the God of Abraham, and the promised land, until the arrival of Moses from the land of Midian, with the rod of God in his hand; and how they felt in the time of the plagues, and at their egression, and when pursued by Pharaoh, and when passing through the sea on dry ground, and when they found themselves safe on the other shore, while Pharaoh and his hosts were sunk like lead in the mighty waters; and talk over all their wilderness travels, and all God's wonderful works; and how they sinned at Massah, Tiberah,

and Kibroth-hattaavah, and were always provoking the Lord to wrath; and how the carcasses of six hundred thousand fell in the wilderness. "Yea, and we should all have been cut off and destroyed, had not the Lord wrought for his great name's sake. It was not for our righteousness, nor the uprightness of our hearts, that he brought us into this good land; but from his own sovereign, self-moving goodness, and that he might fill the whole earth with his glory. Wherefore, we will tell our sons and our sons' sons what God hath wrought; that we and they may fear and reverence that fearful and glorious name, "the Lord our God," and adore his distinguishing goodness, and walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands forever." So it will be just as natural for those who are saved from among men, when the day of judgment is past, and they safe in the heavenly Canaan, from thence to look back, and survey, and talk over all the ways of God to men, and all the ways of man to God, from the creation to the final conflagration. And while they behold the divine nature set in so clear, strong, and striking a light, and the picture still brightened by a view of the shocking conduct of the human race towards him, how will they feel, and what will they say?

Let us but imagine ourselves in the company of the saved, and attend to the conversation of heaven. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and angels, mixed in the same assembly, all join to carry on the conversation, each filled with holy delight, while the ways of God to man, and the ways of man to God, are all the theme.

Adam begins. — "How surprising is it to find myself and so many of my posterity in this happy world! happier a thousand times than the paradise I lost. Indeed, I was happy then; but the scenes of darkness, guilt, and woe, I passed through after my revolt from God, and all I have seen and heard from that day to this, — things never to be forgotten, — will forever heighten the joys of this blessed place. But, O, my foul revolt! How infinitely heinous was the crime! How just, if God had left me and all my race to have gone on in rebellion, died in despair, and spent eternal ages with Satan and his hosts, in yonder lake of fire and brimstone. But sovereign grace interposed; and now I see the promise accomplished — the seed of the woman hath bruised the serpent's head. Know it, then, you are happy, not by me: not to me, therefore, but to God, and God alone, is all the glory due."

Gabriel next. — "Indeed, ye sons of men, is all the glory due to God. He only is immutable. See, in yonder lake, Satan and all his hosts forever lost. Once this was their

abode. With us they worshipped before the throne; but they fell. And so might we have done, but for the grace of God. And so might all mankind have fallen, too, had they been created at once, as we in heaven were; and each set to act for himself, as many of Adam's conceited sons have often foolishly wished had been the case. From the day that Satan fell, to this very hour, every thing we have observed has joined to establish us in this, that there is no safety for finite intelligences but in God alone. He only is by nature immutable. Nor can a creature, how exalted soever, arrive so near to a state of independence, as to be in himself immutably good. God is our strength and refuge, and the only source of our eternal stability; of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom belongs glory forever!"

St. Paul. — "No doubt the interest of the human race was as safe in Adam's hands as it would have been in our own; and it being no injury to us, God might, without any injustice to us, appoint him our public head. And, indeed, considering the design God had in view, there was great wisdom in that constitution; for Adam was suited, as a type and shadow, while we dwelt in that world of darkness, to assist us to right conceptions of Christ, our second Adam, our second public head. The Omniscient, seeing no trust could be put in his saints, and that even the angels could not be depended upon, did, before the foundation of the world, design his own Son should become incarnate, and stand forth as the first born of every creature, the head of the creation of God; that in him he might gather together, fix, and establish all the elect, whether belonging to heaven or earth, as we see at this day."

Adam. — "How glorious is the exchange! Once I was your public head; but in me all was lost. God left me, that it might be seen what was in my heart; that it might appear all flesh is but grass. And now, not I, but his own Son, is your head; and your eternal welfare is secured in the divine immutability. This glory was due to God alone, who only is unchangeable: and this glory, by means of my fall, God has taken to himself in the sight of the whole intellectual system."

Gabriel. — "So Satan once stood at the head of all the angelic hosts, who revolted with him, a mighty chief; and, like the bright morning star, excelled in lustre all those stars of heaven. But how art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! And how hast thou drawn off a third part of the stars of heaven, to join in thy revolt!" *

* We read of *principalities* and *powers* among the evil angels, (Col. ii. 15,) as well as among the good. (Eph. i. 21.) And one of their number is called a

St. Paul. — "But now, not an archangel, nor the father of mankind, but God's dear Son, is, in this new state of things, at the head of all holy intelligences. Both angels and men are gathered together in one; even in Him who is the image of the invisible God, and has exhibited the sublimest picture of the Deity in all his works, but chiefly in the works of our redemption."

Adam. — "And all is free sovereign grace! His giving being, natural powers, and moral excellences to his creatures in their first creation, brought them into debt to him; but not him to them. They owed themselves to him; he owed them nothing. He was unobliged to become their surety. I ought to have been obedient to the God that made me; but I fell; and the throne of the Almighty was guiltless. Destruction was our due. O, how free and sovereign is the grace that has saved us!"

Moses. — "What must have been the consequence, had mankind, in their fallen state, been merely under the law of nature, which required sinless perfection, cursing the man who continued not in all things! And yet this law was strictly righteous; and, as such, was it republished from Mount Sinai, by the Holy One of Israel. But, although our depravity did not free us from the government and authority of God, yet it laid a sure foundation for our breaking the law. And so, had mere law taken place, we should all have been forever lost; and this had been but strictly just. But O the free and boundless grace of God! His own Son became a curse for us, that all these blessings we now enjoy in this happy world might come upon us."

St. Paul. — "Creatures becoming apostate, and turning enemies and rebels to the God that made them, — this did not in the least disannul God's right to them, and authority over them; but they still remained, by right, his subjects, and under his government, and accountable at his tribunal; and, accordingly, we have lately seen wicked men and devils brought to the bar, and there stand without excuse, every mouth stopped, all of them guilty before God. On the foot of mere law, therefore, God might justly have dealt with us after our apostasy; and, by law, might have judged and condemned us all to yonder lake of fire and brimstone, to welter out eternal ages. O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth all understanding! The law was holy, just, and good. He judged it so, he died to answer its

prince. (Eph. ii. 2.) And doubtless he was prince before he fell, as well as since. See Rev. xiv. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9.

demands; nor did he ask our pardon, at his Father's hands, on cheaper terms." *

Gabriel. — "How had it gratified the infernal hosts, lately banished the heavenly world, by law, to have seen law set aside in favor of a fallen race; and how would they have triumphed to see the judge of the whole system respect persons, and have no regard to right. Better, infinitely better, all the human race had been forever lost."

St. Paul. — "You speak the sentiments of all the saved. Had we been pardoned to God's dishonor, it would have sapped the foundation of all our joys. How much soever you pitied our case, you never desired our relief in such a way."

Gabriel. — "I remember well the day the news of your revolt first reached the heavenly world. We thought you all forever lost, and approved the thing as just. We saw no way for your relief; nor shall we ever forget how things appeared; — God's new creation all in ruins, and Satan triumphing in his deed. But O the love of God to you, and O the boundless wisdom of him who sits upon the throne!"

Moses. — "So Israel once, for their idolatry, stood all condemned to death. 'Let me alone,' the Almighty said, 'that in a moment I may destroy them.' I knew the cause was just; and never shall forget how he wrought for his great name's sake."

Gabriel. — "That was but a faint image of this; for now a whole world lay in ruins, and Satan and all his hosts in triumph were ready to say, 'It is beyond the Almighty himself to disconcert our plan. His honor, law, and truth, oblige him to accomplish the thing we would — devote the world to death.'"

Adam. — "Now the full purport of those mysterious words, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head,' once the foundation of all my hopes, although but little understood, — now their full purport all opens to view. On the cross, he spoiled principalities and powers, sapped the foundation of Satan's hopes, and ruined all his hellish scheme. Since his exaltation, he has completed his whole design. Yonder now

* How infinitely shocking, to the inhabitants of heaven, would the work of our redemption appear, had Christ died to answer the demands of an unjust and wicked law. If the law, which requires sinless perfection, on pain of eternal damnation, (Gal. iii. 10,) was a cruel, unjust and wicked law, as some, who pretend to trust in the blood of Christ for salvation, are so inconsistent with themselves as to affirm, it was infinitely wicked the Son of God should die to answer its demands. On this hypothesis, the work of redemption, instead of being the most glorious, would be infinitely the most shocking affair that ever happened.

lies the old serpent, his head, although so replete with craft and poison, thoroughly bruised, and himself chained in the burning lake. But why am I among the saved? Never was there such an instance of free sovereign grace. Satan began rebellion in heaven, and I began rebellion on earth; and why are we not now both together in the same burning lake?"

Abel. — "There is my brother Cain, forever lost. O the sovereign grace of God to me!"

Noah. — "There are the inhabitants of the old world. They filled the earth with violence; were deaf to all the warnings of a long-suffering God; were destroyed in the general deluge; now weltering in the burning lake. O the sovereign grace of God to me! Saved then in the ark; safe now in Christ."

Abraham. — "Such a universal deluge, such a dreadful destruction, one would have thought would never have been forgotten. But no sooner did mankind increase, but they turned their backs on God; and, in a few ages, all began to sink into idolatry. Then was I born in Ur of the Chaldees, where I might have lived and died estranged from God, and been now among the damned, had not God, of his sovereign grace, visited my soul, and called me from the idols of my native land. But, behold, now here I am, and here is Isaac, my son, and Jacob, my grandson, and thousands of my posterity in glory! Everlasting praise is due to free and sovereign grace."

St. Peter. — "Yonder, in that lake of fire and brimstone, is Judas the traitor, once a follower of Christ, now doomed to endless woe. O never shall I forget the black and gloomy night, when I cursed and swore, 'I know not the man,' my blessed Master! Nor shall I ever forget the kind look which brought me to repentance. Nor shall I ever cease to adore sovereign distinguishing grace, but for which I had now been with Judas in the burning lake."

St. Paul. — "But of all the saved, no instance of sovereign grace like me!* once a persecutor and a blasphemer. Never shall I forget the day I set out for Damascus, breathing forth

* *Sovereign;* not because God acted absolutely without any reason at all, in converting a persecuting Saul, who was the worst of the two, and passing by the young man in the gospel; for infinite wisdom always acts on the highest and best reason; but because Saul was not chosen for his goodness, being "the chief of sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15.) Yet God had wise ends in his choice, (see verse 16;) as no doubt he always has, although, in innumerable cases, they are absolutely beyond our reach. God has a right in this case, as the great Sovereign of the universe, to do as he pleases. But he always does what is wisest to be done. His sovereignty is a wise and holy sovereignty, and an infinitely amiable part of his moral character. It is "God's glory." (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.)

threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the holy Jesus. But O the grace, the sovereign grace of God, that stopped me in my career; sent me to carry the glad tidings of salvation to the Gentiles, and gave me thousands to be my joy and crown of rejoicing, as it is this day!"

St. Paul's Converts.— "Once we were dead in trespasses and sins, buried in heathenish darkness, and even under the full power of the prince of darkness; and might now have been with him in woe. But O the sovereign grace of God to us, who sent his chosen vessel, and called us out of darkness into marvellous light, and now hath brought us to this world! Eternal praises to the Lord."

Thousands and millions will speak the same language, and all join to prostrate themselves before the throne, and give all the glory and praise of their salvation to God and to the Lamb. And with the most fervent love and gratitude, attended with the deepest humility and reverence, devote themselves to God, through Jesus Christ, forever and ever. And while all this is observed, very natural must the following reflections be: —

Gabriel. — "How is Satan disappointed in every respect; and heaven become a more glorious and happy place than ever it was. I remember when there was nothing but love, order, and harmony, in heaven and earth. I remember when Satan, a glorious archangel, first broke order in heaven, rose up in rebellion against the Almighty, and how he carried the infection down to earth. And I remember the horrible tragedies he has acted over, from age to age, at the head of the powers of darkness, ruling in the children of disobedience, and filling the world of mankind with sin and woe; and the mighty opposition he has constantly made against the interest and kingdom of the Messiah; sometimes as a red dragon, thinking by fire and sword to bear down all before him; and then, as an angel of light, spreading delusions far and wide, not caring what shapes he put on, if, by any means, he might attain his ends. But now his day is over; his designs are frustrated, his expectations disappointed, and his kingdom ruined. And, behold, yonder lies the monster, chained in that burning lake, now the only place of his everlasting abode, weltering in horror, rage, and dreadful despair!

"If he hoped to bring our glorious Monarch into contempt in his dominions, among his creatures, he is disappointed; for God is more loved, honored, revered, extolled, and praised, than if these things had never happened. If he hoped to lessen his authority, and bring his law into contempt, that it should be looked upon a light matter to transgress, he is in this also

disappointed; for never would it have appeared so infinitely henious, and so shockingly dreadful a thing to transgress, if these things had never happened. Or if he hoped, at least, that the execution of divine vengeance would lessen the manifestations of divine goodness, and diminish the happiness of the intellectual system, he is also disappointed in this; for God has shown his wrath in such a manner as to render the riches of his glorious grace infinitely the more conspicuous in the sight of all the inhabitants of heaven; and their love and joy arise unspeakably higher than if these things had never happened. Yea, all things have worked for good, and turned out well. His pride has been the means of a great increase of humility among finite intelligences, as it has led them to see what they might have come to if left of God. His fall has been the means of our confirmation; his ingratitude, of our being forever the more sensible of the rich goodness of God; his setting up to be independent, the means to bring us to a more absolute and entire dependence on God, the only immutable being; and his aiming at supremacy, seducing mankind, and raising all this confusion in the system, has occasioned the Almighty to assert his supremacy, and set his own Son at the head of the creation, and in him to bring all things to an everlasting establishment, in a way most honorable to God, and the most advantageous to the system. So that he is disappointed in every respect. He meant all for evil; but lo, God meant all for good, to bring to pass as it is at this day.

"So all his successes have now at last ended in the eternal ruin of his cause; and his triumph, in eternal despair of ever again lifting up his head. And all the mischief he hath wrought, hath in fact brought down a tenfold vengeance on himself, in yon lake of fire and brimstone, where he is doomed to lie, weltering under divine wrath, through endless ages, to exhibit to the view of all intelligences the evil nature and dreadful consequences of rebellion. Meanwhile, God and his Messiah reign, and will forever reign. And thus the seed of the woman hath bruised the serpent's head. Amen. Hallelujah."

Such will be the reflections of angels and saints after the day of judgment, when they have seen God's grand plan finished, and from those celestial regions look back and review the whole.

And now, who can doubt but that the humility, holiness, and happiness of the saved will be much greater, perhaps a thousand times, perhaps ten thousand times greater, than if these things had never happened? And how know we, there-

fore, that there may, on the present plan, more honor redound to God, and more good to the system, on the whole, than if sin and misery had been forever unknown; yea, almost infinitely more? *

Objection. "But was there no other way in which God could have made angels and men as holy and happy without the permission of sin?"

Answer. No. Not if there were no other way in which he could so clearly and fully manifest, and so advantageously communicate himself to his creatures, as this; for his creatures can neither be holy nor happy, but in the knowledge and enjoyment of him. Now, if I am not able to prove there was no way, yet the objector cannot possibly contrive a way in which God could have given such clear and full manifestations of himself, and communicate good to his creatures in every respect so advantageously, sin and misery being forever unknown, as he has, and will, upon the present plan; so that, for aught the objector or I know, this, of all possible plans, may be the best contrived to give a full and clear manifestation of the Deity, and raise intelligences to the highest pitch of moral perfection and happiness. And its being chosen by infinite wisdom, before all others, demonstrates that this is actually the case.

Thus, then, stands the argument. God's permitting Joseph to be sold into Egypt in the manner he was, of all other methods, was, as things were circumstanced, the best calculated to answer the noble ends God had in view; at least so far as we can see; and God's actually choosing that method, demonstrates it was actually the best; infinite wisdom being judge. So here, God's laying out the present plan, is of all possible methods the best to answer the noble ends God has in view; at least so far as we can see; and God's choosing this, before all others, demonstrates that this is actually the case; infinite wisdom being judge.

Obj. "But if we grant this to be the best method to accomplish the ends God had in view, and grant his ends are ever so noble and glorious, yet how could it be right for him to do evil that good might come?"

Ans. 1. As God was not obliged to interpose and hinder Joseph's being sold, so his not interposing cannot be called doing evil. And God's not hindering the apostasy of angels

* The computations in p. 55 are sufficient to clear the point. But if two thirds of mankind should be saved, and their happiness be increased but a hundred fold, considering the greatness of their number, the overplus happiness in the whole must be millions of millions of millions of degrees; as any may see by calculation.

and men, can in no sense be called doing evil that good might come; unless we can first prove that he was bound to hinder them. And let this once be proved, the consequence will be, if any of God's creatures and subjects, at any time, sin, then God must bear the blame; and so not the creature, but the Creator, will be under bonds.

2. In some cases, even we ourselves have a right, in a sense, to permit sin, and may act wisely in doing so, as common sense teaches all mankind. Thus a wise and good master, who has a very lazy, unfaithful, deceitful servant, whom he often catches at play when he ought to be at his work, and whose manner is to lie himself clear, if he possibly can, may, upon a time, if he pleases, unseen by his servant, stand an hour and let him take his course, with a view more thoroughly to convict him, and reform him. And this is not doing evil that good may come, but acting wisely, in order to reclaim a lazy, deceitful servant.

3. God was at the head of the system, which was all his own; and it belonged to him to lay out a universal plan,—if I may compare great things with small,—just as it belongs to the head of a family to lay out family schemes. And he knew perfectly well what would be most to his own honor, and to the general good of the system, whether to become surety for all intelligences, at their first creation, before they had learnt their need of his interposition, or rather to let them take their course, and learn by experience what was no other way so well to be learnt, that they might be the better prepared to acknowledge him as the only Being by nature immutably good, and to receive, with suitable gratitude, this super-creation grace, and give him opportunity, meanwhile, to show that he was the Lord, and fill the whole system with his glory, to the great increase of the holiness and happiness of his creatures. And he had a right to conduct according to his own wisdom, and to do what he knew would be best to be done.*

Obj. "Well, if God wills sin, then it seems sin is agreeable to his will. And if, from all eternity, he decreed the misery of his creatures, then it seems their misery suits him. Besides, what is decreed must necessarily come to pass, and so our freedom is destroyed. All which are contrary to Scripture and to common sense."

Ans. "Well," says the idle, deceitful servant, who was catched at his play, and suffered to take his own course for a whole hour,—"well, master, now I see you love I should be lazy, and play; for otherwise you would have hindered me.

* See Mr. Edwards, on *Liberty*, &c. p. 260—267.

And now I see you love to whip me for the sake of whipping; for otherwise you would not have suffered me to have deserved it. Besides, you decreed to permit me to play on that whole hour, and so I could not possibly help it." All which would not only be contrary to common sense, but appear to savor of so great perverseness, and be so very saucy and provoking, that his master would not think it needful to give any particular answer, but rather proper to punish him according to his deserts; for it must be plain to the servant at the same time, that idleness and deceitfulness were the things his master hated in him. And he must know he acted freely, and deserved the whip; and that it became his master to punish such a villain, not only because he deserved it, but also that his other servants might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. Nothing can be plainer than that the Jews acted freely in bringing about the death of Christ; and it was one of the greatest crimes that ever was committed; and yet it came to pass according to the divine decree. (Acts ii. 23; iv. 28.) And none ever thought, because from all eternity God decreed the death of his Son, that therefore his agonies on the cross were pleasing to his Father, as one that loves to see others in misery merely for misery's sake.

Obj. "But yet, is it not a pity any are finally lost? Would it not have been better if all had been saved?"

Ans. It would, no doubt, be better for their own interest, if the rebels in any earthly kingdom would all come in and submit; and they would in such a conduct show more respect to their lawful sovereign. On which accounts their sovereign may send, and sincerely invite and command them to return and submit, although he knows they will not, and is at the same time determined to do no more, but upon their obstinate refusal, as the best thing that can be done, to make them examples of his wrath, in the sight and for the instruction of all his dominions. Nor can any justly say, it is a pity he did not take more pains with them, or that it is a pity he punished them at last.*

* And might not such an earthly monarch send to such rebels, and say, "As I live, I have no pleasure in your death;" "I am long-suffering towards you, not willing any of you should be put to death, but that all should come to repentance;" and that with the utmost sincerity; although he knew their obstinacy was so great that they would not hearken; and although he was before determined to do no more, but, as the best thing that could be done, to proceed to their execution, for the vindication of his honor, and instruction of all his dominions. Surely, none ever thought but that an earthly sovereign may, in such a case, have a real and sincere regard to the welfare of his subjects, considered as men, although he is determined, as a wise governor, to "show his wrath" in their destruction, considered as obstinate rebels, after having "endured with

Pharaoh had shown more respect to God, and it had been more for his interest, had he repented of his oppressions, and without delay yielded obedience to the divine command, and let Israel go. But no man has reason to think it had been better if God had said or done more to make him obedient, or that it was a pity God punished him at last as he did. It was the best thing that could be done.

Moses had beheld all his conduct; and Moses beheld the punishment the Almighty inflicted on him, and on his army; and what did Moses think? Did he think it was a pity that proud and haughty monarch was so brought down?—a pity the cruel Egyptians were thus drowned? Or, did not the divine conduct appear perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty? Now, if none are finally lost but those who deserve eternal damnation, as really as Pharaoh and his host did to perish in the Red Sea; and whose eternal damnation will turn as much to the honor of God and general good of God's chosen people, as did the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, and as much more as perfectly to answer to the greater importance of the case; it is not at all strange if their eternal damnation should appear, in the eyes of God, angels, and saints, through eternal ages, in as beautiful and glorious a light as did the destruction of Pharaoh and his host to Moses, when he composed and sang that song recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. The Egyptians thought it a pity their monarch and his army were lost; yea, to them it appeared a dreadfully shocking affair. But Moses sang, "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously;" and was exceedingly rejoiced to see that he had thus shown his power, and laid a foundation to have his name declared throughout all the earth.

And thus will it appear to all the inhabitants of heaven, when Satan and all his adherents lie overwhelmed in the lake of fire and brimstone. And, therefore, the heavenly hosts are represented in Scripture as singing the song of Moses; triumphing in the destruction of Satan and his adherents, as Moses did in the destruction of Pharaoh and his army, (Rev. xv. 3;) and, as repeating their hallelujahs, exulting and rejoicing while

much long-suffering." Nor did ever any doubt but that he has right to set bounds to his endeavors and to his patience, or that it becomes him to do so. (Psalm lxxxi. 8, 13.) And if God's conduct in giving up obstinate sinners is consistent with all the tender concern he expresses for them, his decreeing to conduct so is consistent too. If he acts consistently, it was consistent to determine to act so. It may be observed that, as the Scriptures take it for granted mankind are moral agents, and proper subjects of moral government, so do I in all the above reasonings. Nor is it needful I should enter particularly into this point again, after what has been already published. (See my True Religion Delineated, and Sermon on Gal. iii. 24.)

they see "the smoke of their torment ascending forever and ever!"

Nor need it seem strange that the inhabitants of heaven, who have so great a respect to God, and are such hearty friends to his interest and to the honor of his government, should so entirely acquiesce in the righteous punishment of his inveterate, obstinate enemies. If vindictive wrath were nothing but groundless, arbitrary vengeance, it would be quite another thing; but as it is, in the Governor of the world, nothing but love to God, to virtue, to the best good of the system, bearing down, in a wise and righteous manner, the enemies of God, of virtue, and of the system, it cannot but appear infinitely amiable in the eyes of the inhabitants of heaven.* It is much more strange that any who heartily acquiesce in the gospel way of salvation, should be stumbled at the final punishment of the wicked. It must be strange partiality in us, indeed, to acquiesce in the death of God's own Son, when standing in the room of sinners, and yet to object against the punishment of sinners themselves. It argues, either that we are very selfish, or else that we love the Son of God less than we do God's obstinate enemies, to be content that he should bear the curse of the law, but loathe that they should. The same views which cause the saints in heaven to acquiesce in God's setting forth his own Son to be a propitiation for sin, to secure the honor of the divine justice, at the same time lead them cordially to approve of the eternal damnation of obstinate sinners themselves.

Besides, to use the apostle's own words, who was inspired by Him who has a perfect view of all things, and knows what is best in so important a case, — "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" What if God, who doubtless is the fittest judge, and to whom alone the decision of this affair belonged; what if God thought it best to single out some of his apostate creatures, some of his obstinate enemies, who inveterately hate him and his government, and, Pharaoh-like, bid him defiance; — I say, what if God thought it best to single out some of these to be examples of his wrath; to be visible monuments of his justice and power,

* Vindictive justice, if I mistake not, arises wholly from love, and is always under the direction of infinite wisdom. And if so, it is an amiable perfection in the Deity. Love is the sum of the moral law, which is a transcript of the moral perfections of God; therefore love is the sum of God's moral perfections. Love to God, to virtue, and to the system, will naturally induce the Governor of the world to punish those who are obstinate enemies to God, to virtue, and to the system, according to their deserts.

that the whole system might eternally see how infinitely he hates sin, and how easily he can subdue his enemies, and what a fearful thing it is to rise in rebellion against him; "and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory;" that, by the means, he might set the infinite freeness and greatness of his grace, exercised towards the saved, in the most conspicuous point of light, who, in their destruction, will eternally see what they deserved, and must certainly have endured, but for the dying love of Christ, and sovereign grace of God? What if infinite wisdom has judged this the best plan? Who is there among all finite intelligences that has right or reason to object?

Obj. "But if this plan was really the best, why do not mankind now prefer it above all others, and heartily rejoice in it? Why so much murmuring around the world?"

Ans. It was but about a hundred miles from Egypt to Canaan, and, in forty days, conducted by Almightiness, the Israelites might have marched from Egypt thither; and the Canaanites being all struck dead in one night, as a hundred and eighty-five thousand once were in the Assyrian camp, (2 Kings xix. 35,) the Israelites might have taken immediate possession, and spent their days in feasting and joy. And had they been offered their choice, no doubt they would have preferred this scheme before their forty years' march in the wilderness; where the Lord led them through a land of deserts and of pits; through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt; and suffered them to hunger and to thirst, and for their murmurings under their trials, struck them dead by hundreds and thousands; for they generally cared only for their own present carnal interest, ease, and comfort. They had no relish to those things which God's heart was chiefly set upon; did not want to see God exalted; his authority established, or to be trained up to a life of entire dependence on God; to have their hearts humbled and broken, and be made to know that not for their righteousness were they brought into that good land; nor did they care any thing about that instruction which succeeding generations might obtain from their trials, and from God's conduct towards them those forty years in the wilderness. And had Moses been able to open to their view the great and glorious ends which were likely to be answered, they would soon have replied, "And what good will it do us if all the earth is filled with his glory, and if all these ends are accomplished, and if it will be better for the nation in the long

run? What good will all this do us, so long as our carcasses fall here in the wilderness? It had been better for us to have lived and died in Egypt. Yea, we had rather never been born, than to undergo what we undergo, and die here at last." Nor had it been in the power of Moses to have stopped their mouths, unless he could have changed their hearts. Yea, notwithstanding all that God himself said to them, they continued murmuring in their tents, till he was obliged to execute terrible vengeance upon them. Fourteen thousand and seven hundred were struck dead at one time. (Num. xvi. 49,) "Now, all these things happened to them for our ensamples, and they are written for our admonition." It were better, therefore, if mankind would leave murmuring at God's ways, which are undoubtedly all wise, whether any mortal in this present dark and imperfect state is able to show the wisdom of them or not. If all that has been said appears to have no weight, and we give up God's plan as being at present absolutely inexplicable, yet, from the infinite wisdom of the Deity, it is capable of strict demonstration, that of all possible plans he has chose the best; therefore, the fault is not in him, but in us. That there were none to be blamed, in the case of the Israelites, but themselves, we now can plainly see; so will it appear at the day of judgment, that God always did right, and acted wisely; and then every mouth will be stopped. And since we are certain this will finally be the case, it infinitely better becomes us to cease our murmurings, and learn to justify God, and take all the blame to ourselves; and, as we are invited, so without delay to cast away the weapons of our rebellion, return and submit to our rightful Sovereign, through Jesus Christ, now while mercy is offered to us.

But if any haughty sinner, Pharaoh-like, says, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, nor care for his authority or government, nor will I humble myself before him,"—let such a haughty wretch know that the Almighty is above him, and can accomplish all his schemes without his consent; for having endured, with all proper long-suffering, such impudent sinners, he can show his wrath and make his power known in their eternal destruction, to the honor of his name, and to the eternal instruction of the saved.

As for those who leave the honor of God, the infinitely great and glorious God, the Author, Proprietor, and King of the whole system, absolutely out of the account, as a thing of no importance, and what the Governor of the world is not at all concerned about, and imagine that the good of God's creatures and subjects is the only thing to be attended unto, in all the divine

conduct, as moral Governor of the world; as for such, I say, it is impossible to reconcile any part of God's plan to their fundamental maxim; for if nothing was of importance but the creature's good, why was not that solely attended to? Why were all put on trial? and why eternal destruction threatened for the first offence? or ever threatened at all? or the sinning angels expelled the heavenly world, and the human race all doomed to death for the first transgression? And if our good is all that God now has in view, why have not more pains been taken for our recovery, from age to age, from the beginning of the world? Yea, why are not infinite wisdom and almighty power effectually exerted to render all eternally happy? For the saved, if this principle is true, will be eternally grieved to see any of their fellow-creatures forever in hell torments. Nor can the eternal torments of the damned answer any valuable end, on this hypothesis.

Strange are the positions which the Chevalier Ramsey has laid down, in order to reconcile the divine conduct to this notion. He maintains that "God did not certainly know that his creatures would fall; and if he had known it, he could not have hindered it consistently with their free agency. He has been trying ever since to reclaim them; intends to continue in the use of means till he has reclaimed them all; the torments of hell, being the most powerful means of grace, are finally to be used, with such as cannot otherwise be reclaimed, merely out of pure love to the damned, to purify and bring them to a better mind; so all at last shall be recovered and made forever happy!" But if God meant to use the most powerful means with a fallen world he possibly could, and that in every age, as upon that hypothesis it must be supposed, why did he send but one Noah to the old world? Why not two or three thousand? Why did he raise up but one Moses, and but one Elijah, and send them only to the Israelites? Why did he not raise up thousands in every age and nation under heaven, and make thorough work? And why does he not take more pains with us of this age? raise up thousands as well qualified to preach as St. Paul? and pour out his spirit on all flesh, as he did on the three thousand on the day of Pentecost? If our good was all he had in view, and he really intended to save us all, one would think he would now use the most powerful means to reclaim us, and not stay till the day of judgment, and then doom us to hell, in order to fit us for heaven. Besides, at that great day, a guilty world will find that Christ does not come to enter upon the use of further means to recover the wicked, but o give them their final doom. Christ will not come to save a

guilty world, but to judge them; not clothed with love, but in flaming fire; not to do them good, but to take vengeance, (2 Thess. i. 8;) not out of love to them, but to show his wrath, (Rom. ix. 22;) not to purify them, but to cast them, like worthless chaff, into unquenchable fire, (Matt. iii. 12;) not to fit them for, and finally to bring them to heaven, with the good wheat, but as tares to burn them up, (Matt. xiii. 30;) not aiming at their good, as vessels of mercy, but aiming at their destruction, as vessels of wrath, (Rom. ix. 22;) not to discipline them for a season, but to punish them with everlasting destruction, (2 Thess. i. 9;) send them into everlasting fire, (Matt. xxv. 41;) into everlasting punishment, (ver. 46,) where the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched, (Mark ix. 44, 46, 48;) but the smoke of their torment shall ascend forever and ever, (Rev. xix. 3;) and the eternity of hell torments will effectually convince the whole system that God has an infinite regard to something else besides merely the good of his creatures; as it is meet and fit he should, (see Mal. i. 6, 14;) and this part of his conduct will help to complete his picture, and finish his true character, in the eyes of all intelligences. As yet, mankind hardly believe him in earnest. Words do not answer the end; but actions speak louder than words, and will work a thorough conviction.

As for the common plea, that "God needs nothing from his creatures, and so can only aim at their good," it is a way of reasoning contrary to the universal sense of mankind, in all cases in any measure analogous. The father does not require honor from his son, merely because he needs it, but because he deserves it. The master does not require reverence from his servant, merely because he needs it, but because he deserves it. And if the one should despise his father, and the other treat his master with contempt, they would soon feel the force of that reasoning, in Mal. i. 6 — "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. If, then, I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." — "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." — "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts."

Nor is there any way to establish that maxim which yet lies at the foundation of almost all the modern schemes of religion, but to prove, either that the Deity does not deserve supreme

honor, or that the moral Governor of the world is not just; for if he deserves it, he ought to have it. And it belongs to the moral Governor of the world to see justice done, that is, to see that every one has his due.

And, indeed, it is the chief happiness of the inhabitants of heaven, to see God universally honored, and each one to join to give him the glory that is his due. They incessantly cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory." "They fall down before the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

If the honor of God is of infinite importance in itself, then it is infinitely desirable for itself; and then to see God honored and exalted, will be of all things most happifying to holy intelligences; and that plan which is suited to this, will be the most happifying plan; and there may be the greatest degree of happiness on such a plan, and yet all things be so contrived as that it may eternally appear in the most striking light, that there was something God had an infinite regard to, besides the happiness of his creatures. On this hypothesis all the parts of God's present plan may be accounted for.

But if the honor of God is of no importance in itself, then it is not desirable for itself; nor will it be a happifying sight to see God exalted; nor that plan that is suited to exalt God, a happifying plan; yea, no good end can be answered by such a plan; and so no part of God's present plan can be accounted for.

If the creature's happiness is the only thing of worth, then infinite wisdom and almighty power should be employed only to promote it; and the everlasting punishment of the damned can answer no good end; as, on this hypothesis, none can deserve it, nor can God desire it, or any holy being acquiesce in it, or receive any instruction from it.* And why God ever permitted sin or misery to enter into this world, will be absolutely unaccountable; as will every step God has taken with fallen intelligences ever since Satan's apostasy; for why did not God instantly restore fallen angels and fallen man, and immediately confirm them, if their welfare was the only thing of worth?

In a word, I humbly conceive this position — that the welfare of creatures is the only thing of worth, and the only thing to be regarded by the moral Governor of the universe — is one

* See this proved in my True Religion Delineated, vol. i. p. 187.

of the most groundless, irrational, unscriptural positions, that ever was laid down; little, if any thing short of, nay, worse than the grossest absurdities practised by the heathen; for what did they worse than "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator"? But on this hypothesis, the creature alone is to be served; and God himself, the glorious Creator, is to become his almighty servant; and to be loved only and merely for his faithfulness in the creature's service. The creature has taken the throne, and the Creator is become his servant. No wonder such a scheme suits the heart of fallen creatures. And its being ever broached, or ever received in God's dominions, by any of his creatures, is a full demonstration that they are fallen indeed. Yea, not only fallen, but sunk into so great degeneracy and delusion, as to think that God himself is fallen too, and quite turned to be of their side. And now they love him, and think all is well. "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself."

But it is time to proceed, as was proposed,—

III. To make some practical improvement of the whole.

1. What has been said may be of use to assist us to form right ideas of God. The law gives us a true picture of the moral perfections of the divine nature. God is exactly what the law speaks him to be; yet the gospel sets his moral perfections in a still clearer light; the glory of God shines exceedingly bright in the face of Jesus Christ. But God's universal plan, comprehending law and gospel, and all God's dispensations from the foundation of the world to the final consummation of all things, sets his moral character in the completest and most striking point of light; and puts us under vast advantages, even in this present state, to make a swift progress in the knowledge of the Deity. Indeed, had we that high relish for divine knowledge, that good taste for divine beauty which they in heaven have, our proficiency might bear a great resemblance to theirs. But, O, how stupid are we to divine things! having eyes to see, and see not; ears to hear, and hear not; neither do we understand; hearts of stone, that have no feeling. We are even as beasts before him; so that while his glory shines all around us, we are in profound darkness. O for the influences of the blessed Spirit, to awaken our attention to the manifestations he makes of himself, and to give us a true taste and relish to the beauty of divine things! Then would our hearts be enlarged to love the Lord our God, and to fear him, and to walk in all his ways, and to rejoice in the wisdom of his universal government. O for that blessed day, when we shall receive the Holy Spirit in a full and perfect measure! Then

shall we see no longer in this dark manner, but, as it were, face to face; shall, in a measure, at once take in the idea which God has exhibited of himself, and be ravished with the wisdom, glory, and beauty of his universal plan.

2. What has been said may be of use to assist us, not only to form right notions of all infinite intelligences, as being, in their best estate, at an infinite remove from self-sufficiency and absolute independence, — the peculiar prerogatives of Him who alone is by nature immutable, — but it may also be of special use to assist us to form just notions of the true character of mankind now in their fallen state. Facts are stubborn things. The steady conduct of mankind, from the fall to this day, gives their true character beyond dispute. Only think what they ought to be, perfectly in love with God, and full of love to one another; and see what their conduct has always been towards God, and towards one another. Towards God — "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." Towards one another — "Living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

> "Who live in hatred, enmity, and strife
> Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,
> Wasting the earth, each other to destroy;
> As if (which might induce us to accord)
> Man had not hellish foes enough besides,
> That day and night for his destruction wait."
>
> MILTON.

And so obstinate in their sinful ways, that, in fact, no external means have ever been able to reclaim them; so alienated from God, that no arguments can persuade them to be reconciled; so that, notwithstanding all the outward means which have been used, yet still the world is as it was; the Christian nations very little better, if so good, as some heathen have been. (Matt. xii. 41.)

3. What has been said may be of use to realize to us the infinitely evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin. Let us view the lake of fire and brimstone, and see what will be the issue of the grand rebellion. Sin has turned angels into devils, and banished them from heaven, and will confine them forever to the burning lake, with all their adherents from this apostate world. Let us view God's conduct towards sin, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things, and we may see how infinitely he hates it, and how resolved he is to suppress it. O, how infinitely dreadful had been our case in this fallen world, had a Savior never been provided!

4. What has been said tends to give us the sublimest ideas of the divine interposition on the fall of man, to defeat Satan's designs, and bring infinite good out of all the evil that Satan intended. O the depth of the knowledge, wisdom, and grace of God! glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! This theme is worthy of eternal contemplation, and will appear new and fresh, and ravishing, through eternal ages, to all the blessed inhabitants of the upper world; especially to the bride, the Lamb's wife. The saved from among men will have some ideas and joys peculiar to themselves, that even the elect angels will not intermeddle with; and sing a new song, that none can learn but those who were redeemed from the earth. (Rev. xiv. 3.)

5. What infinite madness are the sons of men guilty of, that they can be inattentive to all this glorious grace; go on secure in sin, and persist in their adherence to Satan's interest, although they know that Satan and his hosts, and all his adherents, are destined to the lake of fire and brimstone! O, poor, blind, infatuated creatures, to adhere to Satan, our first enemy, who so maliciously sought our total ruin, deceived the happy pair, and plunged all this world in woe; to be deaf to the kind calls of the Son of God, who means to defeat Satan's designs, and has died in the cause, and now reigns in heaven with the same views, and invites us all to submit to his government and trust in his blood. And can you still go on, in bold defiance of almighty vengeance, and make a jest of eternal burnings? O, how horrid the thought, infinitely horrid the thought, that so many of the human race are daily imprecating damnation upon themselves, calling upon God to damn their souls to hell! Poor creatures, they little think what damnation means. They little think what it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Who that loves God, or has any compassion for immortal souls, can think of the present blind and miserable state of a fallen world, and not long for the blessed day when Satan shall be bound, and the Messiah reign on earth?

6. But let me conclude the whole with an address to the spiritual seed of Jacob.

As Jacob was in great distress, when his son's coat, all besmeared with blood, was brought into his presence, and said, "Surely he is rent in pieces, and I shall see him no more;" and afterwards, when Simeon was left in Egypt, things looked darker still, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take away Benjamin also. All these things are against me!" and yet, in the end, he saw the wisdom, beauty, and glory of the whole plan which God had laid; so shall it be here. How

dark soever the present state of the world is, and how dark soever it has been for long ages past, that it has hardly looked like God's world, but rather like a world where Satan reigns; and how impossible soever it may seem that all should issue well; yet we have the greatest reason to believe it will, and to rejoice in the prospect of that blessed day. For this is the very plan which infinite wisdom chose before all other possible plans; the very plan which God himself laid out; all the parts laid out upon design; every thing adjusted by infinite wisdom. The whole, therefore, must be perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty; and will appear so, when once it is finished.

Look through the lesser parts of God's great and universal plan; his dispensations to Jacob and Joseph, to Moses and the Israelites of old; these, although once very dark, are now full of light, and easy to be understood. And if God's works are wise and beautiful, so far as we can understand them, this argues the whole are so; for doubtless all are of a piece, the Author being the same, and always acting like himself.

Besides, notwithstanding the dreadful state of the world in our day, and in all ages past, there may be time enough yet, before the day of judgment, for such great events as may put quite a new face upon the whole. Nor need we doubt the accomplishment of these great events, because they have been so long delayed. It is God's way to promise, and make his people wait; but he was never known to disappoint their expectations. To Adam he said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Adam lived above nine hundred years, and looked, and waited, and died; but it was above eleven hundred years after his death before God even so much as mentioned his ancient promise; all his posterity on earth, eight only excepted, destroyed, meanwhile, in the general deluge; that some, perhaps, were ready to think God had quite forgot his promise; till, in the days of Abraham, it was renewed. Again they look; but still it does not come; but long, dark ages intervene, and his people are put to wait about two thousand years more. And then, behold, it is come, the joyful day is come. "I bring you tidings of great joy," said the angel, "for this day the Savior is born."

I see not why the predictions of the glorious days are not as full and as plain as were the predictions of the Messiah; nor why we may not as firmly believe the setting up of his kingdom, as of old they believed his coming in the flesh. It is certain this is a great objection of the Jews against our Jesus being the true Messiah, that the things prophesied of the Messiah have never been fulfilled in him; that "the nations should beat their

swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more;" and that there should be "nothing to hurt or offend;" — the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth, as the waters do the seas, etc. Nor do I see any possible way to answer their objection, but to say, these things are still to be accomplished.

And if they should be accomplished in all that glory in which they are painted in the prophetic descriptions, nothing hinders but that this plan, of all possible plans, may at last actually prove to be the best; in all respects the best; most for God's glory, and most for the good of the system too; yea, so far as we are able to see, it seems as if this must be the case.

It is matter of the greatest joy, that all the affairs of the universe are conducted by infinite wisdom. It is an honor that belongs to God, to govern the world which he has made; to govern his own world; to lay out and order the affairs of his own family. We think we have a right to lay out schemes for our own families, and should take it ill if our children or servants should dispute our right. Sovereign monarchs, in time of war, think they have a right to lay out a plan of operation for an ensuing campaign, and would take it ill if their right should be disputed by a private soldier. Much more has God a right to lay out a universal plan, for the conduct of all things, in a world to which he has an original, underived, absolute right; nor can he look upon the worm that dares dispute his right, but with infinite contempt and detestation. And, O, what matter of infinite joy it is, that he has taken this work upon himself; not left things to the devil's control; nor to be decided by the lusts of an apostate world; nor left all things to mere chance; but himself, in infinite wisdom, has laid out a universal plan; a plan perfect in glory and beauty! No mortal, that loves his plan, will think of disputing his right to lay it. And no mortal, that loves God himself, that loves his law, and loves his gospel, can be an enemy to his universal plan; for they all partake of the same nature, and shine forth in the same kind of beauty — holy, just, and good.

O ye seed of Jacob! Joseph is safe, and Benjamin is safe: the honor of God is safe, and the good of the system is safe; all is in good hands, and under the conduct of infinite wisdom. "For the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." Wherefore set your hearts at rest. For, let the state of the world and of the church look ever so dark, you may safely trust in the Lord, and stay yourselves upon your God, who is engaged in honor to conduct all well; and, for his great name's sake, he will not fail to do it. (See Ezek. xx.)

You therefore may, with the utmost serenity, leave the government of the world with him, and put an implicit faith in his wisdom and fidelity, and have nothing to do but your duty; nothing, but to attend upon the business he has marked out for you; like a faithful soldier in an army, who trusts his general to conduct affairs, while he devotes himself to the business he is set about; and the more he rejoices in the wisdom of his general, the more alert will he be in discharging the duties of a soldier. Wherefore, "rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." Let this be your first maxim—The Lord reigneth; and this your practice—Let the earth rejoice.

But it must be with a holy joy; with such a joy as results from a supreme love to God, and hatred of sin as an infinite evil; with such a joy as St. Paul describes—"Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth;" for no other joy will answer to the nature of God's universal plan, which is altogether suited to exalt the Deity, and set sin in an infinitely odious point of light, and to cause truth and right universally to take place.

There are some who say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan; who say they trust in the Lord. while, at the same time, the name of God is blasphemed through their unrighteous and ungodly lives. So once there was a mixed multitude came out of Egypt, and joined in the general joy at the side of the Red Sea, merely from selfish views; but the Lord knew how to try them, and their joy, ere long, was turned to murmuring. For their hearts were not yet right, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

O ye seed of Jacob, trials, many trials, are yet to be expected; dark and gloomy days, while the dawning light of the glorious morning comes gradually on. Get ready, therefore, for trials. Be willing that "all flesh should be brought low, and that the Lord alone should be exalted." (Isa. ii. 17.) "Seek meekness, ye meek of the earth, for it may be, ye may be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." (Zeph. ii. 3.) For "behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Blessed is that man who shall overcome all trials, and be true

to the Messiah's interest through all changes; for "he shall stand in his lot at the end of the days," in the general assembly of the just in heaven. "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Humility, self-diffidence, entire dependence on God, the inward source of constant watchfulness and prayer, perfectly become us, and are exactly suited to the state of things in the intellectual system. Satan, a glorious archangel, fell; Adam, the father of the human race, fell; all mankind are now in a fallen state; the powers of darkness determined on our ruin. No room, therefore, is left for pride, self-confidence, self-dependence. Hell is our proper due; and free grace, through Jesus Christ, our only hope. Snares and dangers are all around us. "Watch and pray, therefore, that ye enter not into temptation."

God is the only being by nature immutably good. Were we innocent, we might possibly fall; and God would be unobliged to hold us up. Now we are sinners; now we are already fallen creatures; there is no hope in our case, but we shall totally and finally fall if left to ourselves, and as certainly perish as we now exist. And whither shall we look for help, but to the only immutable being? and how but through the means and mediation of Christ?—being infinitely unworthy that God should hold us up; and yet our eternal interest lies all at stake!

O thou Father of our spirits, amidst ten thousand dangers, apostate, self-ruined, self-destroyed, helpless, hell our due, we look to thee! O, help us! O, hold us up! O, keep us, by thy power, through faith, unto salvation; to the glory of thy free grace through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Now to him who loved us and gave himself for us, to him be glory, honor, and praise, forever and ever. AMEN.

THE

WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN,

VINDICATED;

IN ANSWER TO A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED

'AN ATTEMPT," &c.

HE IS THE ROCK; HIS WORK IS PERFECT: FOR ALL HIS WAYS ARE JUDGMENT: A GOD OF TRUTH, AND WITHOUT INIQUITY, JUST AND RIGHT IS HE.

Deut. xxxii. 4.

PREFACE.

If the divine conduct towards the intellectual system can be vindicated, there will be no room for any dispute about his decrees. If God always does what is best for him to do, his decreeing from eternity to do so, cannot be objected against; unless we can suppose it to be wrong for God to determine upon a conduct in all respects right. All God's decrees primarily respect his own conduct. *First*, what a world to create. *Secondly*, how to behave towards his creatures, in every particular circumstance. For "God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence." The whole of the divine conduct towards intelligent beings, after they are brought into existence, may be arranged under these two general heads. 1. What he does. 2. What he forbears to do. For instance: He placed our first parents in the garden; he forbid them to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge on pain of death. These things he did. He did not hinder the serpent from tempting, nor our first parents from eating. These things he forbore to do. If he always has a good reason for doing what he does, and for forbearing what he forbears, then his whole conduct, as comprehending both, is justifiable.

To vindicate the conduct of the Holy One of Israel, was the design of my sermons on "the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin." But the author of the "*Attempt*," not believing that God has done so well in this affair as he might have done, has undertaken to write against — against whom? against me? No: rather, to write against his Maker. For he does not deny the

fact, namely, that God permits sin; but endeavors to prove, that God in this, as well as in some other things, has not done "what was most for his own glory." So that the design of the following pages is not to vindicate myself, but to vindicate the God that made us all. I have certainly the best side of the question; and could I do justice to the subject, I might expect the approbation of all the friends of God. For, as a dutiful child loves to hear the righteous cause of his injured father pleaded, so does every true Christian, every real child of God, love to hear the works and ways of the Holy One of Israel justified. And even when they cannot fully see the reasons of the divine conduct, they are disposed to believe that he has done well; because he is an absolutely perfect being, who cannot err. Nor do I know how to be so uncharitable to the author of the "*Attempt*," as to suppose that he will, on second thoughts, in good earnest abide by what he has published. Rather, I hope, his belief that "supreme wisdom cannot err," will finally prevail over his doubts, that "God does in fact what is not most for his own glory."

A VINDICATION

OF THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT God permits sin, is plain fact, cannot admit of dispute, and needs no proof. Or if any should be so weak as to deny the fact, it may be easily proved. For all acknowledge that sin is in the world; but if God had interposed, and effectually hindered its ever coming into the world, it never would have been. That he did not interpose and effectually hinder it, is therefore as certain, as that sin is now in the world. And God's not hindering sin, is what I call his permitting it. And this fact, that God permits sin, gives rise to this question, namely, — Is it wisest and best that God should conduct as he does in this affair?

Had we a comprehensive view of God's universal plan, and a perfectly holy taste, the whole of the divine conduct towards the intellectual system, of course, must appear to us now in this world, perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty; as, it is acknowledged, it will to all holy beings at the day of judgment. But as the evil and dreadful consequences of sin to us at present engross our attention, and the good to be brought out of evil, how great soever it may be, is almost entirely out of sight, to be sure, to the generality of men; and not at all suited to please a vicious taste, were it in ever so clear a view; it is no wonder if it be very difficult to bring a guilty, apostate world to think well of the divine conduct in this affair. And yet if we once conclude, that the Holy One of Israel has not done what is most for his own glory, nor what was wisest and best to do, we must inevitably give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature, which will overturn all religion by the roots.

To say, that "secret things belong to God, and we ought not to think of this part of the divine conduct; nor is it our duty to believe it to be wise, or to acquiesce in it, as such;" will not satisfy a pious, judicious mind. Indeed, were it a secret thing, and had we no evidence of the fact, it might justly put an end to all our inquiries. But God's permitting sin is in truth no secret thing; it is revealed, it is as open and manifest as that God made and governs the world. It is often, very often, held up to our view in the Holy Scriptures, by God himself, on purpose that we might think of it. And it is acknowledged on all hands, that it is our duty to search the Scriptures, and take special notice of what we find written there, and meditate on every part of divine conduct therein held forth to our view; since the whole is calculated and designed for our instruction. (2 Tim. iii. 16.) And as it is an acknowledged fact, that God has permitted sin in millions of instances, from the beginning of the world to this day, and will continue to do so through eternal ages, so there is no avoiding a view of his conduct, but by the greatest stupidity, or shutting our eyes in the most obstinate manner. Nay, this will not do it; we cannot but think of it sometimes in this world, and shall forever think of it in the world to come. And we must approve or disapprove; for it is so interesting an affair, that we cannot stand neuter. If we disapprove now, and forever, we cannot acquiesce in God's ways in this world, nor join the heavenly hosts at the day of judgment, in saying, Amen, Hallelujah. And God, of necessity, must look upon us as enemies to him, and malecontents in his kingdom, and treat us accordingly. It is therefore of the last importance that we approve. But if God's conduct is not wise, it is not our duty to approve of it; rather we ought to be sorry, and lament that God has done as he has; which would suppose him to be to blame, and which would imply that he is not an absolutely perfect being; and if so, he is not God; and if there is no God, all religion is overthrown; therefore we must believe the divine conduct to be wise. But how shall this belief be obtained? Firstly and chiefly, by an implicit faith in the absolute perfection of the divine nature, which, secondly, may be strengthened by a view of the wisdom of such parts of the divine conduct as we can more fully comprehend; which, thirdly, may be still more confirmed by right views of the true nature of God's universal plan. All these I have endeavored to lead my readers to attend to, in my sermons on the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.

And had the author of the "Attempt" carefully attended to

the subject, as I had stated it, and entered thoroughly into my reasonings, I should naturally have been led to review the whole, and to retract or confirm, as light and truth appeared. But this he has not done; but rather, to use his own words, according to his professed design, he has exerted himself to the utmost to set out the doctrine, "if possible, in all its horror and deformity." So that what I have to do, is to take off this ill dress, and array it in its native beauty; that the divine conduct in the permission of sin may not be blasphemed, by ignorant and wicked men, through his means; and the moral rectitude of the divine nature given up, to the subversion of all religion. Nor shall any thing in his piece, that needs an answer, pass unconsidered.

SECTION I.

SEVERAL PARTICULARS, WHEREIN THE AUTHOR OF THE SERMONS ON THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE ATTEMPT, ARE AGREED.

We should always exactly state the point in controversy before we begin to dispute. Wherefore let us see how far this author agrees with us; that the point of difference may be made to stand out in clear view.

1. We agree, that sin is in the world, and that dreadful have been the consequences for above five thousand years. And it is likely to issue in the eternal ruin of great multitudes of God's creatures.

2. We agree, that sin is the very worst of evils in its own nature, and it naturally tends to evil, and only to evil; to dishonor God and ruin the system.

3. We agree, that the eternal ruin of such great multitudes of God's creatures, considered in itself, is an infinitely dreadful thing.

4. We agree, that all the sin and misery that has or ever will take place in the system, through eternal ages, — how infinitely dreadful soever the whole must appear to one who has a perfect, comprehensive view of it all at once,— even the whole lay open, full and plain, to the divine view, before God created the world; and that he had as full, perfect, and lively an apprehension of it, before he began to create, as he ever will have to eternal ages.

5. We agree, that, if God had pleased, he could have hindered the existence of sin, and caused misery to have been forever unknown in his dominions, with as much ease as to have suffered things to take their present course.

6. We agree, that God knew, with infallible certainty, that things would take their present course, and issue, as they will issue, in the eternal ruin of millions, unless he himself should interpose, and effectually hinder it.

7. We agree, that God did, as it were, stand by, and take a perfect view of the whole chain of events, in which his honor and the good of his creation was infinitely interested; and, in a full view, and under a most lively sense of the whole, did deliberately forbear to interpose effectually to hinder the introduction of sin into his world, when he could have hindered it as easily as not.

8. We agree, that angels and men were under the greatest obligations to love and obey God, and were left to their own free choice; and that God was not obliged, in point of justice. to do any more for them than he did; and that the whole blame lies at the creature's door; and that God is righteous in punishing his sinning creatures according to the declarations of his word. All these particulars I had asserted; none of them has he denied; nor does it appear that we differ in any of these things.

SECTION II.

THE GRAND POINT IN CONTROVERSY EXACTLY STATED.

The grand point of difference is precisely this: "I believe, that the infinitely holy and wise God, in every part of his conduct relative to the intellectual system, does that which is really wisest and best for him to do; most for his glory, and the good of the system, in the whole; and, therefore, that God's present plan is, of all possible plans, the best; most for his glory and the good of the system." On the contrary, the author of the "Attempt" believes, that "God is not obliged to do, and that in fact he does not do, that which is most for his own glory, or most for the good of the system; and is fully persuaded that the present plan is so far from being the best, that it had been infinitely more for the glory of God, and the good of the system, if sin had never happened."

In the sermons he objects against, it had been said, that "from the perfections of the divine nature alone we have such full evidence, that he must always act in the wisest and best manner, as that we ought not in the least to doubt it. Before the foundation of the world, this system now in existence, and all other possible systems, equally lay open to the divine view, and one as easy to the Almighty as another. He had his choice; he had none to please but himself. Besides him there

was no being: he had a perfectly good taste, and nothing to bias his judgment, and was infinite in wisdom. This he chose: and this, of all possible systems, therefore was the best, infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude being judges."

But the author of the "Attempt" esteems this reasoning quite inconclusive, as it proceeds on a false hypothesis. "A fallacy," he says, "to suppose that God must necessarily always will and do that which is most for his own glory." A point he does not believe, "that in fact he always does," or that "he is obliged to do it." He thinks it plain in the works of creation, that God has not done what would have been most for his own glory, and that he might have done much better; which emboldens him to argue, that in the works of providence, he did not mean to do his best. And he attempts to prove at large by nine arguments, that it had been much better, in the whole, more for God's glory, and the general good of the system, if sin and misery had been forever unknown. And if it had been better for God to have hindered sin, it was not wise in God to permit it.

So that this is the fundamental and most essential point of difference, and that on which the whole controversy between him and me turns, namely, Whether the whole, and every part, of the divine conduct, be agreeable to infinite wisdom; or, in other words, whether God means, in the whole and every part of his conduct, to do that which he knows to be for the best, most for his glory and the good of the system, on the whole. For we both agree, that God always knows what is for the best, and never acts under mistake. So that the only question really is, whether God always means to do what he knows to be for the best on the whole; for if he does, the grand point is proved. The wisdom of God in the permission of sin is demonstrated; and it is in vain to raise objections against that which infinite wisdom knows to be best. It is proud and arrogant, it is impious and blasphemous, for a worm of the dust to dispute against his Maker. (Isa. xlv. 9. Rom. ix. 20.)

SECTION III.

GOD, WHO IS A BEING OF INFINITE WISDOM AND PERFECT RECTITUDE, ALWAYS CONDUCTS AGREEABLY TO HIS OWN MOST GLORIOUS PERFECTIONS; THAT IS, IN THE MOST WISE, HOLY, AND PERFECT MANNER; PARTICULARLY IN THIS CASE.

We are agreed, that this affair of the permission of sin was an infinitely important affair; and, indeed, considering it in all

its consequences, there perhaps never was a more important affair that God ever had to decide. It involved in it the welfare of the angelic world, and the welfare of the whole human race. The honor of God was infinitely concerned in the affair; yea, the very life of God's own Son did, as it were, lie at stake; for if sin was permitted, the Son of God was to die. If God ever thoroughly considered and weighed any affair whatever, no doubt he did this; and, if ever he was concerned to act according to his best judgment, if I may be allowed to use such a phrase, in any one case, no doubt he was in this. And if God is an absolutely perfect being, it was simply impossible that he should conduct, in this infinitely important affair, contrary to the light of his own mind and the joint declaration of all his perfections, infinitely to his own dishonor, and infinitely to the damage of the system, absolutely without any motive so to do; yea, against infinite motives to the contrary. Nay, to suppose that God would deliberately and voluntarily, absolutely without any motive, suffer his own creatures to sin, when he knew it would be, on the whole, infinitely better for him to hinder it, is, in the most barefaced manner, to give up the moral rectitude of the divine nature.

Did the inhabitants of heaven view the divine conduct in the permission of sin in this blasphemous light, and firmly believe God to be such a being, instead of crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," as they did when God gave up Israel of old to blindness of mind and hardness of heart, they would rather sink down into amazing grief, and fill all heaven with loud lamentations. And saints on earth, instead of singing their ancient melodious song, "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof;" might rather, if these things were so, with the captive Jews, hang their harps on the willows, put on sackcloth, sit down in sorrow, and refuse to be comforted.

A firm belief of the infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude of the divine nature and government, is essential to the very foundation of all true religion. For it is the very reason of our love to God, of our joy in him, rejoicing in his universal government, acquiescing in all his dispensations, even those which we cannot understand, and of our cheerful obedience to all his commands. If, therefore, we give up this belief, we must give up all religion; and shall be in as bad or worse condition, than if we believed there were really no God.

And this doctrine of the wisdom and rectitude of the divine government is also the very foundation of that doctrine plainly

taught in Scripture, and universally believed by all Christians, namely: that at the day of judgment, the righteousness of all God's ways will be made manifest to all the world, and the wisdom of all his conduct cleared up before the intellectual system, to God's everlasting honor, to the joy of all holy beings, and to the eternal confusion of all God's enemies. For then will the Lord come "with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." But if God's ways have not in fact been wise and good, they cannot, at the day of judgment, when all things will be brought to light, appear to be so. If God has done wrong, — heaven forbid the blasphemy! — all the world will know it then. And if God had deliberately and voluntarily acted contrary to his better judgment, in this infinitely important affair of the permission of sin, absolutely for no good end at all, and absolutely without any motive, it will then appear before the eyes of angels, men, and devils, to God's eternal reproach, to the eternal grief of all his friends, and to the eternal triumph of all his enemies, who will be glad to see the being they most of all hate fall under blame, as well as themselves.

If this were the case, it would be, for aught I can see, more for God's honor that there never should be a day of judgment, and that the truth of things never should come to light; yea, it had been better if God had never made the world.

And now does the author of the "Attempt," in very deed, believe all this horrid blasphemy; that he should blame me so much, for being so confident that all God's conduct is wise and good; and his present plan, of all possible plans, the best? For why should he blame me so much for my belief, unless he is strong in the belief of his own scheme?

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN *A.*, THE AUTHOR OF THE "ATTEMPT," AND *B.*, THE AUTHOR OF THE "SERMONS ON THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN."

A. No. I abhor this blasphemy with all my heart. I firmly believe that all the divine conduct is "good, right, best." "Right in matter, manner, and aim;" the result of "supreme wisdom, which cannot err." But I affirm that sin is "no part of God's scheme; but a device of the devil." "God's original scheme was to have all holy and happy." The devil has dis-

concerted it by his rebellion, and God is heartily grieved. Did I believe "the present scheme to be God's, I should think it extremely dangerous opposing it; and that it would argue the highest vanity, arrogance, and impiety." *

B. If by "sin not being God's scheme, but the device of the devil," you mean, that God did not voluntarily permit sin; but that the devil brought it in, in spite of all that God could do to hinder him; why do you maintain, that God did not mean to do, in this affair, what he knew was most for his own glory? For, according to this, God exerted himself to the utmost, to secure his own glory, and the good of the system too; and would have obtained his end, had not his Almighty power been overmatched by the devil. This, therefore, cannot be your meaning, unless you would be inconsistent with yourself.

If you only mean that the devil sinned, and not God, I grant it. But the question still remains unanswered. Pray, therefore, tell me, why did the infinitely wise and almighty God permit such a glorious angel as Satan once was, ever to devise such mischief; ever to perpetrate so shocking a deed, a deed pregnant with infinite and eternal woes — pray tell me plainly, did God act wisely in this affair, or did he not? He had some end in view, or no end. Not no end; for that would reflect upon his wisdom. If some end, it was a good end or a bad one. Not a bad one; for he is a most perfect being; therefore it must be a good one. When God determined to permit sin, upon a full view of the whole affair, he knew it wisest and best to permit it; that is, he knew that plan in which so much sin and misery should take place would be better, on the whole, than a plan in which sin and misery should forever be effectually prevented by his constant interposition. And if he knew this to be the best plan, it was doubtless his original plan; for an infinitely wise and perfect being, who cannot err, would originally choose what, upon the whole, he knew to be the best.†

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* The quotations in this part of the Dialogue are chiefly, if not altogether, from the pamphlet entitled "An Attempt," etc. In the first edition, references are made to the pages on which they may be found, and are very numerous. As the pamphlet cannot now be obtained, and as it would not probably be thought important to verify the quotations, if it could, they have in this edition been omitted.

† This is not a point peculiar to Calvinistic divines, but as strongly asserted by men of learning in general. "If the Author and Governor of the world be infinitely perfect, then, of all possible systems, he hath chosen the best;" "that is, the system in which the greatest quantity of happiness and perfection obtains, that can in the nature of things take place." "This is the joint doctrine of reason and revelation." — *Dr. Turnbull, Chris. Phil.*, p. 35, 47.

A. "This is what I conceive, I have a right, as a man and a Christian, to oppose." It is a mere "fallacy" to pretend "that the present scheme is most for the glory of God; because he must necessarily always will and do that which is most for his own glory." I think you much to blame for being so "positive." For my part, I do not believe "that God does in fact, or that he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory." And I can prove by a variety of arguments, that it had been better, infinitely better, infinitely more for the honor of God, and the good of the system, if sin had never been.

B. What! plainly contradict yourself so soon, my friend! However, pray do give me an instance wherein infinite wisdom ever erred; and wherein God did not do what was on the whole most for his own glory.

A. It is plain God might have made the world much better than he did. And if, after he had made the world, he had hindered the existence of sin, it had been infinitely more to his honor, and to the good of the system.

B. Pray how, then, do you think the whole of the divine conduct will appear at the day of judgment, if not only his works of creation are defective, but if, in this infinitely important affair of the permission of sin, God has done what he knew was not for the best; permitted sin, when it had been infinitely better if he had hindered it.

A. I am of the opinion, that, at the day of judgment, all God's works and ways will appear to be good. "Full day will be then poured on all the ways and works of God; to the unspeakable joy of those who now heartily acquiesce in the dispensations of supreme wisdom; and humbly admire and adore, where they cannot fully comprehend." For I firmly believe, that all the divine conduct is the result of "supreme wisdom, which cannot err."

B. Dear sir, what do you mean? All the divine conduct the result of "supreme wisdom which cannot err?" so that "all his works and ways will bear the light of full day?" And when brought into the clearest view, will appear to be "the dispensations of supreme wisdom," worthy to be "heartily acquiesced in" by all wise and holy intelligences, with "unspeakable joy." Although they will see in the clearest light, that God has made and governed the world in such a manner as he himself knew was not for the best, not most for his glory, nor most for the good of the system! What! will all holy beings, at the day of judgment, think it best that God has not done best and wisest, that he has counteracted his wisdom! and most glorious, that he should do what he knew was

not most for his glory, and for the good of the system! and humbly admire and adore his acting contrary to his own infinite wisdom, holiness, and goodness, as firmly believing this was the result of "supreme wisdom which cannot err"? Pray explain yourself on this point.

A. What I say is really true. "Supreme wisdom cannot err." "So far as God has been concerned in the transactions of the system, they must be good, right, best." But "sin is no part of God's scheme, but a device of the devil."

B. Very well, sir. And do I understand you now? Do you really mean, that God, in permitting the devil and other wicked beings to do as they do, that God in this has done what was indeed "good, right, best?" For if God's conduct is but approved of, you may condemn the devil as much as you please; my point is gained; the wisdom of God in the permission of sin is acknowledged. Pray speak plainly.

A. Indeed, sir, "I do doubt, whether God does in fact, and therefore whether he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory." And I do believe, it had been infinitely better if sin had never been.

B. Why, then, do you profess firmly to believe, that the whole of the divine conduct "is good, right, best;" and that "supreme wisdom cannot err?" And that "all the divine dispensations are to be heartily acquiesced in, as being supremely wise?" How can these things be consistent?

Had you, sir, justified your Maker, fully acknowledged the wisdom of God in the permission of sin; and wherein my solutions of difficulties appeared to you not sufficient, had you given better; still endeavoring to justify the ways of God to men, and to assist the people of God in their belief of the wisdom of all the divine conduct; and so to animate their love, and quicken their obedience; you had merited the thanks of the public, and the love of all pious people, and might have been approved of, even in heaven. But do you think Almighty God will be pleased to have his conduct in the permission of sin disputed against, and set in the "most horrible, deformed light possible," by one of his own subjects, who ought to love him, approve of all his ways, and plead his cause in this revolted world? Or do you expect, that the friends of God in heaven or earth will be suited with your "Attempt," who are all united in believing concerning God, as it is written in Deut. xxxii. 4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect. For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he"?

A. Whether what I have published is consistent or no, I should be extremely glad of a reply to my objections.

B. A full reply to almost all your objections has been already given: partly in Mr. Edwards on Liberty, partly in my Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the permission of Sin, and still more fully in Mr. Hopkins's Sermons on Rom. iii. 5, 8, to which you may be referred.

A. But there is one argument on which I lay great weight; yea, on which I build my whole scheme: namely, that as "God does not in fact, so he is not obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory;" an argument you have none of you answered. I have expressed it in these words, namely: —

"It is allowed by all, that God is infinite in power, and that space is infinite. Now here is evidently room for endless displays of divine glories. In no definite period of time, in no given quantity of space, can there be a full discovery of God's glories; because they are absolutely infinite; and therefore may we not, with the utmost safety, affirm there is not now such a display? We know there is now a greater display of God's various natural and moral perfections, than seven thousand years ago; for there are now multitudes of rational beings, which then were not; and an infinity of other objects, in which are surprising manifestations of wisdom, power, and goodness, etc. Had God been obliged to make as great displays as he could of his perfections, he must from eternity have produced into existence all possible beings — the contrary of which is evident. And may we not be naturally led from this to doubt, whether God has so much glory from the things which now exist, as he might have had; especially when we consider the obvious defects and blemishes there are, and can easily imagine how these might be corrected by infinite wisdom?"

B. True, sir, we have none of us answered this argument. Nor did we expect it would be used by any in this country, as I believe it never was before. It has often been used by professed atheists, in other countries; who, from the pretended defects of the natural world, have argued that it could not be the work of an absolutely perfect being; and so that we have no evidence that there is such a being. And it has been abundantly answered by some of the most learned writers in our nation, in their attempts to establish the belief of a God, that is, of an absolutely perfect being.

Suffer me, sir, to give you two or three short extracts out of Dr. Cudworth's Intellectual System, where, writing in confutation of atheism, he says, "Their first objection is against providence, as to the fabric of the world, from the faultiness of the mundane system, intellectually considered, and in order to ends; *quia tantâ stat prædita culpâ;* that, because it is so ill

made, therefore it could not be by a God; where the atheist takes it for granted, that whosoever asserts a God, or a perfect mind, to be the original of all things, does, therefore, *ipso facto*, suppose all things to be well made, and as they should be. And this doubtless was the sense of all the ancient theologers." (p. 875.) As in some modern theists, who pretend to solve the difficulty by saying, *Quia Deus non tenetur ad optimum*, "because God is nowhere bound or obliged to the best," he shows the absurdity of their scheme. (p. 873, etc.) In p. 874, he says, "God is an impartial balance, weighing out heaven and earth, and all the things therein, in the most just and exact proportion, and not a grain too much or too little of any thing. Nor is the Deity therefore bound or obliged to do the best, in any way of servility, much less by the law and command of any superior, but only by the perfection of its own nature, which it cannot possibly deviate from, no more than ungod itself. In conclusion, therefore, we acknowledge the atheist's argument to be thus far good; that if there be a God, then of necessity must all things be well made, and as they should be; and *vice versa*. But no atheist will ever be able to prove, that either the whole system of the world could have been better made, or that so much as one thing therein is made ineptly."

And having spent several pages in answering various objections of atheistical writers against the works of creation and providence, he concludes the whole in these words: "And now, having fully confuted all the atheistical grounds, we confidently conclude, that there is one only necessary Existent, the cause of all other things; and this an absolutely perfect being, infinitely good, wise, and powerful; who hath made all things that were fit to be made, and according to the best wisdom, and exerciseth an exact providence over all." Thus far Dr. Cudworth.

And this, doubtless, is the belief of Christian divines in general, of whatever denomination. To be sure, Dr. Whitby is full in it. These are his words: "As it would be in us an intolerable piece of insolence to say, against the plainest declarations of the Scripture, that God did not in wisdom make the world, because we are not able to discern the wisdom of all things framed in it; so must it be an equal insolence in us to say, God doth not act, in the preserving it, and in the ordering of affairs in it, according to the measures of true goodness, because we cannot dive into the reasons of his dispensations."

To which let me add a short extract out of Dr. Turnbull's Christian Philosophy: "The creation of an all-perfect mind must be the image of its Creator; and therefore it must be

perfect, it must be chosen by infinite wisdom and goodness as the most perfect system, that is, the system in which the greatest quantity of happiness and perfection obtains, that can, in the nature of things, take place; and this being the case, all the seeming imperfections and evils in it, are such only in a partial view; and with respect to the whole system, they are goods."

Yea, Mr. Chubb himself, though justly numbered among infidel writers, had juster notions of God's moral character, than to think that God might do better than he does. These are his words: "I shall take it for granted, that God is, and that he is necessarily, an immense, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, a self-sufficient, and an unchangeable being. This being allowed, from hence it will follow, that as God is always capable of doing what is most worthy and valuable in itself, and which, in the nature of things, is right, good, best, and fittest to be done, seeing he knows wherein the goodness, fitness, and valuableness of every action lies; so he always will act thus, because right, good, fit, etc., are so very beautiful, and excellent in themselves; and are so preferable, in the nature of things, to their contraries, that they always will afford a proper and sufficient motive," etc.

But to come to a more particular consideration of your argument, the grand argument on which your whole scheme is built; yea, the only argument you use, to prove that God might permit sin, although he knew it was not for the best; not most for his glory, or the good of the system; and that therefore we can have no certainty that he would not, from the absolute perfection of his nature. And this, in a few words, is the sum of it. God, in the work of creation, has not done his best, but might have done infinitely better. If this be so in one instance, it may in another. Therefore we can have no assurance, from the absolute perfection of the divine nature, that God means to do what is best in his works of providence; but have reason to think he might have done infinitely better.

Well, if it be really so, that God does not mean to order the affairs of the universe in the best manner, I have had too good an opinion of God, and have put too much confidence in him; and I must learn, for the time to come, to have lower thoughts of God, and higher thoughts of myself. I must begin to think myself a suitable judge, to set up and censure God's works and ways, and point out wherein he might have done better; not in the least suspecting that God is wiser and better than I am, and more able and willing to order things for the best; or that it savors of arrogance and pride for a worm of the dust to say

to the infinitely wise God, "In this, O Lord, and in that, thou mightest have done better; had I been at thy right hand, chief director, I could have laid a plan for a better natural world, and for a better moral system;" not once imagining, that God may have wise reasons for all his works, and all his ways, which lie beyond my reach; but rather confident, that he had no good reason; because I see none. Wherefore I may venture safely to censure, as unwise, any steps of divine providence, the wisdom of which I do not see. And so, the more blind I am to the wisdom of the divine ways, the more faults I may find, and the more fully point out the divine errors. And so, God must no longer be esteemed as always acting agreeable to infinite wisdom, because I cannot see it; and, in the vanity of my mind, I am entered into a way of thinking and reasoning, that is the result of the greatest folly, and pregnant with the grossest blasphemy.

A more particular answer to your argument is, sir, I humbly conceive, really needless. For, if I can imagine to my own fancy a better natural world, and a better moral system, yet, as I do not know that my own imaginations are right, I have not the least reason to call in question the wisdom of the divine conduct; unless I put more confidence in my imaginations, than in "supreme wisdom, which cannot err." But you expressly own, that you "cannot pretend to prove to a demonstration, that the present scheme is not the best." And merely because I cannot see the reason and wisdom of God's works and ways at once, to doubt, whether God has acted so wisely as he might have done, just as if he might not have good reasons in view, which never entered into my mind, becomes me neither "as a man or a Christian." We, who do not see the whole of God's universal plan, nay, not the millionth part of it, are not in a capacity to pronounce it a bad plan. It becomes us rather to put an implicit faith in the divine wisdom; and to believe it to be good, because it is God's. I a little wonder, sir, how you dare so freely censure the works and ways of God, your Maker and final Judge!

A. "Could it be made to appear that the present scheme is God's, I readily own it would be extremely dangerous opposing it: and argue the highest vanity, arrogance, and impiety."

B. Very well, sir; and do you not know that the natural world is wholly the work of God? God, and God only, was the Creator of the universe. The devil had no hand in the work of creation; and yet, here you oppose, "dangerous" as it is; yea, here you begin your opposition. Here you discover such defects and blemishes, and can easily imagine how things

might have been better done; the world might have been created much sooner and larger; and, it seems, you think, infinitely better on the whole; infinitely more to the glory of God, and containing infinitely more happiness. So that, for aught appears, you have nearly or quite as low an opinion of the natural as of the moral world; and could mend the one as easily as the other. Yea, from God's no more consulting his own glory in the works of creation, you are led to doubt whether he has consulted it, so much as he might have done, in the works of providence.

But this arguing, you see, is directly and professedly against God's works, and that considered as such. And yet you say, "If it could be made to appear that the present scheme is God's, it would be indeed extremely dangerous opposing it." But let the danger be greater or less, you have ventured to oppose and censure the works of creation, which you own to be God's work; yea, and finding the works of creation so little to the glory of God, to what they might have been, you are induced to doubt, whether God means always to do that which he knows would be most for his own glory. And from this grow bold to think, that God might, consistent with his perfections, permit sin, — a thing he has done, not merely once, but persisted in every day, hour, and moment, near six thousand years, in almost an infinite number of instances, — when he knew that, on the whole, it would have been infinitely more to his honor and the good of the system if he had hindered it; and so, at last, really give up the moral character of the Deity. For it is capable of strict demonstration, that infinite wisdom cannot err. Find one error, therefore, in all God's works, and it will prove to a demonstration that he is not infinitely wise; much more, if you find an error infinitely great, and persisted in for almost six thousand years.

A. Sir, I proposed this "with the greatest humility."

B. Pray, but how does it look to make a proposal "with the greatest humility," which is of such a nature, as that the proposer himself, at the same time, is obliged to own must argue "the greatest vanity, arrogance, and impiety!" And then, by the mere strength of such a proposal, to attempt to overthrow the wisdom of God's universal plan, even to the ruin of the moral character of the Holy One of Israel!

If to all this you should reply, "This way of reasoning does not convince me; I cannot believe a work is done in the wisest and best manner, and most for God's glory, merely because God has done it. If it is arrogant and impious to object, yet I feel inclined to object, and must do it. I do doubt, whether

God always does in fact, and therefore, whether he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory:"—I say, if you should make this reply, pray suffer me, without offence, to desire you to read Isa. xlv. 9, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." It may do sometimes, my friend, for worms of the dust to find fault with the works and ways of their fellow-worms; but it is "extremely dangerous" to find fault with the works and ways of the great Jehovah.

Besides, you often insist "that we should acquiesce in that account of things we have in Scripture." But the Scripture nowhere leads us to think, that God, in the works of creation or providence, ever does "what is not most for his own glory;" but every where to the contrary. Yea, we ourselves are required, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God." And can we at the same time imagine, that God allows himself, in the most important affairs, to do "what is not most for his own glory?" Would God have us aim at his glory more than he himself does? Besides, the Scriptures inform us, that when God had finished the work of creation, and surveyed the whole, he pronounced it all to be "very good," notwithstanding all the objections you have to make against it. And the pious psalmist cries out, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all."

A. But why did not God "from eternity produce into existence all possible beings?" Would not this have displayed his perfections more fully, and to better advantage?

B. Is there not an absurdity in the notion of creating from eternity? Yea, does it not imply a contradiction very evidently, to say, that any being might have been brought into existence from eternity? For, if it was from eternity, it was always in existence, and so could never have been brought into existence.

A. I did not mean strictly "from eternity." But there is no "period of time" can be mentioned, in which God may not have created the universe.

B. According to Scripture, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Then time began. Strictly speaking, there was no time before; nothing but eternity.

But you will say, God might have created the world sooner. "*Sooner!*" Pray in what sense? Not nearer the beginning of eternity; for eternity never had a beginning. Not so soon, but it might happen that the world should be just as old as it is now, when it was no older. Not so soon, but that the inhab-

itants of the earth, about five or six thousand years after the creation, might, with as fair show of reason as can now be pretended by any, object, and say, "Why was not the world created *sooner?*" Not so soon, therefore, as to obviate this difficulty any better than it is at present.

A. But God might have brought "all possible beings" into existence at once; which would have given a greater display of his perfections.

B. I believe that God knew exactly how large it was best to create the universe; and in what order to bring beings into existence, so as in the wisest manner to answer the best ends. And I believe he created it exactly to his mind; for he meant to please himself. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

And how know we, dear sir, if God thinks best to have a larger number of intelligences to behold his glory, and be happy in him, but that he judges it best not to bring them into existence till the present "grand drama" shall be finished at the day of judgment; that they may, without sharing the hazard of the present confused state of things, reap the benefit of the whole through eternal ages; while angels and saints may be appointed their instructors, to lead them into the knowledge of all God's ways to his creatures, and of all their ways to him, from the time of Satan's revolt in heaven to the final consummation of all things. And so, as the Jewish dispensation was introductory and preparatory to the Christian, so this present universe may be introductory and preparatory to one, after the day of judgment, almost infinitely larger.* That this will be the case, I do not pretend so much as to conjecture; but I firmly believe, that what is best on the whole, that infinite wisdom always has done, and always will do; and here I rest.

I will only add, that the death of Christ, and the work of our redemption, gives a display of the divine perfections infinitely

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* If the divine conduct, on the present plan, is perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty, then the present plan may be a good introduction to as many future systems as God pleases, till the whole sum of good is raised to the highest possible degree. Or, rather, the knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness, of finite intelligences may continually augment, with the greatest celerity, through eternal ages; while system after system comes into existence under the best possible advantages for the swiftest progress in all divine improvements. But if God has missed it in the beginning of his works, there is a foundation laid for ill thoughts of him to be handed down to all succeeding systems, through eternal ages, if any such should ever be. And the damage of what is past can never be repaired. If our author's hypothesis is true, it seems as if it would be a pity that any more worlds should ever be created, to come to the knowledge of their Maker's dishonor; yea, a pity the present system ever came into being.

fuller, and shows what God is in an infinitely clearer and brighter manner, than the creation of systems. It is a small thing with the Almighty to create worlds; a work scarce worth our notice, or worthy ever to be thought of, compared with the work of redemption by the death of his Son. To be sure, God himself, who is infinitely the best judge, views things in this light. "For behold!" saith the Lord, speaking of this very thing, "I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind."

The Son of God only spake a word, and the old creation came into being: an easy work. But, for the new creation, all his glory must be laid aside; he must put on the form of a servant, groan in the garden, and die on the cross! And as his thus dying was a work infinitely greater than speaking a word, so the new creation will be proportionably more glorious than the old; as it is written, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." But this greatest and most glorious of all God's works could never have been, had God interposed and prevented the existence of sin. Did you, sir, view the work of redemption in the light of Scripture, surely it must give you a different idea of God's universal plan; nor could you, if you love what God loves, think so meanly of that which to God appears so infinitely glorious.

A. But I have many arguments to prove, that it had been infinitely better, infinitely more to the honor of God, and good of the system, if sin had never been. Yet it is plain fact, God has permitted sin to be; therefore it is certain, God does not always mean to do that which is best.

B. However, according to your own concession, all your arguments do not amount to a demonstration. For you say, "that you cannot pretend to prove to a demonstration that the present scheme is not the best." But we may be as certain that infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude cannot err, as that two and two make four. Now, to attempt to confute what we are certain to a demonstration is true, by arguments we are sensible fall short of demonstration, is very weak. And to give up the infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude of the divine nature and conduct on such grounds, how can it be but inexcusable impiety? To censure the conduct of civil rulers, known to be men of superior abilities and of great integrity, when we are not under advantages to enter into the secrets of state, or to know scarce any of the reasons they act upon, is always deemed arrogant and wicked. Much more must it be so here, as we have the greatest certainty, that the Supreme Ruler of the universe is

a being of infinite understanding, and of perfect rectitude; and as we are at an infinite remove from a full comprehension of his grand universal scheme.

A. I grant this reasoning looks plausible, and that "some pious, conscientious persons may have been induced to believe the wisdom of God in the permission of sin" by it; but it does not convince me. For if once I should believe, that it was wisest and best in God to permit sin, most for his glory and for the good of the system, I should feel myself under a necessity to look upon sin as being in its own nature a good thing; for the glory of God and good of the system; and that God delights in it as such; and that, therefore, instead of hating sin, mourning for it in ourselves, lamenting it in others, we ought rather to esteem it as really a good and virtuous thing; and as such to rejoice in it, and even to keep an everlasting jubilee in remembrance of Satan's revolt and Adam's fall — events so infinitely glorious! absurdities so shocking, that I never can believe them.

B. And absurdities, let me tell you, that if you did but understand the scheme you are opposing, you would know, are so far from following from it, that they are absolutely inconsistent with it.

For the doctrine of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, supposes sin in itself, and in all its natural tendencies, to be infinitely evil, infinitely contrary to the honor of God, and good of the system. For herein consists the wisdom of God in the affair, not in bringing good out of good, but in bringing infinite good out of infinite evil, and never suffering one sin to happen in all his dominions, but which, notwithstanding its infinitely evil nature and tendency, infinite wisdom can and will overrule to greater good, on the whole. So that all these objections are without weight.

For sin in itself, and its natural tendencies, being just as evil as though God never meant to, and in fact never did, bring any good out of it, is as much to be hated for its evil nature and tendency, to be repented of in ourselves, and lamented in others, mourned for, watched, and prayed, and preached against, as if no good was ever to be brought out of it.

Just as it was in the affair of Joseph. It was a vile, an impious and barbarous thing, for his brethren to do as they did; hateful in itself, and in the eyes of God, and of all good beings; and to be mourned for, and lamented, and testified against, as such. It was dishonorable to God, whose authority they despised, and whose design to advance Joseph they intended to frustrate; cruel to their aged pious father, and barbarous to their brother;

and in fact, they were verily guilty; as their consciences testified, in the day of their distress. (Gen. xlii. 21.) And if after all this, contrary to their intentions, great good comes out of this affair, no thanks to them for that. They were still verily guilty; and even every whit as much to blame as ever; and had as great reason for godly sorrow, and true repentance; as is plain to the weakest capacity. I appeal to the common sense of all mankind.*

A. Sir, I am of another opinion. I affirm, that, "if sin is the occasion of greater good, in the whole, there is no reason to repent of it; for it ceases to be sin."

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* In Gen. xlv. 5, Joseph, speaking to his brethren, says, "Now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." Which Pool thus explains: "Be not grieved, to wit, immoderately, etc., he doth not dissuade them from godly sorrow." "Nor angry with yourselves." In the Hebrew it is, *neither let there be anger in your eyes;* that is, neither excessively torment yourselves with the remembrance of the fact, neither break forth into contentions and wrath, and upbraidings of one another. "For God did send me before you to preserve life; that is, God by his wise, powerful, and gracious providence, overruled your evil intentions to a happy end, etc., which, though it doth not lessen your sin, yet ought to qualify your sorrow." See Pool on the place.

N. B. Joseph's brethren had been for some time in external circumstances very distressing; their minds full of heaviness and grief from that quarter; and they ready sometimes in their anguish to be angry at, and upbraid one another, for what was past; which kind of grief was not of the nature of godly sorrow; and this was what Joseph referred to. He would not have them grieve and afflict themselves in that sort; for that all was brought to a happy issue. He did not mean to dissuade them from godly sorrow. He knew, the more they saw of the wisdom, holiness, and goodness of God in this affair, the more would they love him, and loathe themselves, and mourn after a godly sort, that they had endeavored to counteract him. The more beauty they saw in God's scheme, the more would they hate their own, which was designed to frustrate his.

God's scheme was to advance Joseph, etc. Their proud hearts could not endure it. They viewed him as having a native tincture of vanity. They envied him, and wanted to keep him down, and laid a scheme for it, which God overruled, directly contrary to their very hearts. Now for them to look upon God's scheme as glorious, must imply in its very nature, that they looked upon their own scheme with the utmost abhorrence; which must suppose deep humiliation and sincere repentance. They could not really and heartily like God's scheme, without a sincere abhorrence of their own. Nor can any one being in the system heartily like God's scheme in permitting sin in general, without a sincere abhorrence of sin in general; and a hearty desire that all sinful schemes may be frustrated, just as this was, which Joseph's brethren had laid; for this is God's design. Had Joseph's brethren, before they were deeply humbled, been let into God's scheme, to see what he had done to advance their brother, their envy would have revived; and they felt an inclination to lay some new scheme to take him down. They must be deeply humbled, before they would heartily approve God's scheme, and be willing to bow to Joseph. But let their proud hearts be humbled, and they love their brother as they ought; and they would be glad to see him exalted, and would be ashamed to think of what they had done, and cheerfully pay him the honor which was his due. So a perfectly humble and holy temper would lead us perfectly to acquiesce in God's universal plan, which is designed to exalt God, and make all his happy subjects feel their comparative nothingness, to the highest possible degree, that God may be all in all. See this illustrated at large in my Sermons.

B. You affirm so, it is true; but it is impossible, if you will consider the case, that you should believe so. Pray, tell me, was it not a sinful thing for Joseph's brethren to sell their brother, or for the Jews to crucify the Lord of glory, because God, in both cases, contrary to their design, brought great good out of these great evils? I appeal to your own conscience.

A. Nay, but if you appeal to me, I must frankly tell you, that if greater good is brought out of evil, we are not to be sorry, but rather to rejoice that we have sinned. This principle I take for granted, as self-evident. And on this hypothesis I build my reasoning.

B. Then, it seems you think, that Joseph's brethren had no cause to repent of their sin, in attempting to frustrate God's design to advance their brother; because, in spite of all their malice and envy, God overruled all they did to bring about his designed advancement to the best advantage. Their sin, you say, "God in infinite wisdom overruled for the advancement of Joseph; the preservation of Jacob and his family; and a train of the most happy events to the church of God, from that day to this." To which you add, "It must be confessed, much of the divine power, wisdom, goodness, etc., was displayed in bringing so much good from such treachery." Therefore Joseph's brethren ought, instead of sorrow, rather to "keep an everlasting jubilee," in remembrance of their malice, envy, cruelty, and impiety, exercised in that deed. This is one of the "pernicious consequences," not of mine, but of your own scheme. Nor can it be got rid of, as to those instances of sin, which you acknowledge God has overruled to greater good. And as you own "you cannot prove to a demonstration but that greater good will finally be brought out of all sin, in general; so upon your scheme you cannot be certain, that you or any other sinner has reason to repent of sin. You do not know, as yet, whether to be sorry or glad. Yea, according to you, "it is above your, or perhaps any human talents," to decide this question. Therefore, upon your scheme, all sinners must put off their repentance, until, by some new revelation from heaven it is declared, that God never will overrule all to greater good. And as soon as ever we are assured, that God does not intend to overrule all things to his glory and to the good of the system; then, and not till then, must we begin to be sorry that we have sinned; that is, to be sorry that we have not sought the glory of God and good of the system with all our might. But why should we be sorry now, for, if God does not seek his own glory, why should we? If he does not aim at

the general good, why should we? Ought we to be more holy than God himself? No: the utmost extent of our duty is only to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. So that, finally, your scheme, in whatever light considered, will exclude true repentance out of the world. However, there is this comfort by the way, that your scheme is so plainly inconsistent with common sense, that it can never be believed by a rational creature. To suppose that my sin is lessened, because, contrary to my design, good is brought out of it by another being, let the good be ever so great, instead of being self-evidently true, is really self-evidently false.

A. "Can that be evil which exactly coincides with the divine will?"

B. The Jews did nothing, but what God's counsel determined before to be done; as the apostles, full of the Holy Ghost, expressly declare, and that even in their prayer to God. (Acts iv. 28.) And they tell the Jews in so many words, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by *wicked* hands have crucified and slain." Which very doctrine the spirit of God set home on the consciences of their hearers, and they were pricked at the heart, in a sense of their sin and guilt; and cry, what shall we do? and the apostles call upon them to repent. But do you, sir, verily think, that the Holy Spirit, these divinely inspired apostles, and their converts, were all inconsistent with themselves; and will you contradict the spirit of God, the apostles, the primitive converts, and the universal sense of mankind, rather than not oppose the wisdom of God in the permission of sin?

A. "How an infinite, holy being could lay a plan, which was infinitely wrong and wicked to execute," I cannot conceive.

B. You will doubtless readily own, that the following plan was laid by "an infinitely holy being;" because you have it from his own mouth. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn, and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea over against Baal-zephon: before it, shall ye encamp by the sea." But why? "For," says the Holy One of Israel, who knew what the consequence would be, "Pharaoh," when he hears where you are encamped, "will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in." They cannot escape. I have them at my mercy. "And I will," by this circumstance, "harden Pharoah's heart, that he shall follow after them, and I will be honored upon Pharaoh

and upon all his host: that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." Here was a plan laid by an infinitely holy being, which was infinitely wrong and wicked for Pharaoh to execute. However, he did execute it. "And it was told the king of Egypt, that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him." And what was the issue? "They sank like lead in the mighty waters;" and Israel sang, "the Lord hath triumphed gloriously." And thus God ordered things as he did, professedly on design that Pharoah might do as he did. And when he had done what God intended he should do, he wrought a miracle to destroy him. And Moses, without the least difficulty, saw the holiness and wisdom of God in laying this plan, and the wickedness of that bloody tyrant in executing it, and the righteousness of his destruction.

So again, the whole plan of Christ's crucifixion was laid by the Holy One of Israel, before the world began; and was so very particularly described in the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, some hundreds of years before it was accomplished, and so plainly foretold by our Savior before his death, and compared with the ancient types and prophecies after his resurrection, that the apostles plainly saw that Jews and Gentiles had done nothing but what God had before determined should be done; and yet they could easily see, that this did not in the least lessen their guilt; and so can any body else. For it is plain that the Jews did not mean to accomplish the glorious scheme which God had in view in the death of his Son; but only to gratify their pride, malice, envy, and revenge, in the death of one whom they hated without a cause.

A. But if God is perfectly pleased with his own plan, why is he not perfectly pleased with wicked men for executing it?

B. Thus saith the Lord, in Isa. x. 5, 6, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, to tread them down like the mire of the streets." This was God's plan, and it was perfectly agreeable to him, and the Assyrians executed it thoroughly in the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, a few years after. (2 Kings xvii.) But was God pleased with the Assyrians for what they did? No: so far from it, that he devoted them to destruction therefor. (Isa. x. 12.) But why? because they did not mean to serve God, but only to gratify their own lusts.

"He meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few."

A. But "it is certainly most for God's glory, that those things should be done which, when done, most advance his glory: for had they been neglected, some things most for his glory would have been neglected." Therefore, all the sin that ever was or ever will be, "is best" on this scheme; "most for God's glory, and most for the happiness of the creation in general."

B. As to wicked men, as has been said, they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so. They are enemies to God and to his glory, and aim only to gratify their corruptions. But as to God, it is true, as it is written in Psalm lxxvi. 10, "The wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." All the sin that has been, or ever will be, God will turn to his glory. Nor will he ever suffer any one sin to be committed, but what he sees with absolute certainty is best to permit in this view. And this is so far from reflecting upon God's holiness, that it is the only way to vindicate his conduct. And while you oppose this, you are obliged to say, that "in fact God does not do that which is most for his glory."

A. Can a crime which is "infinitely to God's dishonor, be infinitely to his honor?"

B. God can bring infinite honor to himself out of such crimes as in their own nature are infinitely dishonorable to him; as you yourself will not deny.

A. Well, if this be so, the more sin the better.

B. I hope you have not forgot the doom St. Paul gives those who say, "Let us do evil that good may come,"—namely, that their damnation is just.

A. But upon your scheme, "all sinners do sincerely seek the glory of God in the gratification of their lusts; and so they are all good men, and will be saved."

B. That is because God intended to glorify himself by all Pharaoh's haughtiness; therefore Pharaoh himself, when he bade defiance to the God of the Hebrews, sincerely sought the glory of God; and so was a good man, and is gone to heaven! Do you really believe this, or do you mean to banter on so serious and grave a subject?

A. I believe "your scheme will encourage wickedness; and your libertine young gentlemen will be extremely obliged to you for a scheme so favorable to their indulgences."

B. No sir, by no means; for it is a prospect of success, that encourages men to action. This encouraged Joseph's brethren

to sell their brother; they hoped to prevent his advancement; and this encouraged Pharaoh to try his strength with the God of the Hebrews: he hoped to conquer at last. Had they in both cases foreknown how things would have issued, they would have had no courage to do as they did. But my scheme is, that all sinners will, sooner or later, be disappointed as much as they were; and all their wicked schemes and conduct be overruled to answer ends as contrary to their intentions; therefore, were my scheme universally believed with all the heart, it would put an everlasting end to all the courage of all wicked beings in the whole system. Pray, sir, put it to your own case. Would you be encouraged to write against the wisdom of God in the permission of sin once more, if you knew that God would overrule it, to confirm the doctrine, and bring you to shame in the sight of all the country? that is, is a certainty of complete disappointment the great encouragement to action?

A. But if God thinks it for the best that sin should be, why does he forbid it, and take so much pains to hinder it?

B. Ask Moses, if God thought it best to suffer Pharaoh to refuse to let Israel go, why did God send him so often to say to Pharaoh, in the name of the Lord, Let Israel go, that he may serve me? Or, rather, as your question most immediately reflects upon the Holy Majesty of heaven and earth, whom you implicitly charge with inconsistent conduct, if you have courage ask him; or, rather, recall your question, as it is so plain a case, that in the whole of that affair God's conduct was perfectly consistent; for, by the whole, God meant to let it be known that he was the Lord, and to fill the whole earth with his glory; which end was answered by all the methods he took to make Pharaoh sensible of his duty, and by his leaving him, after all, to harden his heart, and act against the clearest light; whereby he was prepared for so remarkable a destruction; in which God showed his power, and caused his name to be declared throughout all the earth.

A. But can you forbid your child to do a thing, and then stand by and permit it to transgress, consistently with yourself?

B. Parents, and tutors, and masters often do so; that while they catch their children, or pupils, or servants, at their bad tricks, they may be under the better advantages to convict and reform them; and so have one and the same end in forbidding and in permitting; and children of four years old are able to see the consistence of such conduct.

Joseph's brethren were very proud and very envious: this prompted them to sell their brother. God hated their pride and envy. God intended to reform them. God suffered them

to exercise and gratify their pride and envy in selling their brother, and then overruled this their wickedness, so as greatly to humble them. They bow to their brother. Yea, they are glad to bow to him, and pay him honor. And all this was, in God, perfectly consistent, and perfectly wise.

A. But "this is making God do evil, that good may come of it."

B. No, sir, not unless it is "doing evil" for God to act in the wisest and most perfect manner: that is, not unless you call good evil, and evil good. And I leave it to the impartial world, which scheme makes God the author of sin, that which supposes that he always acts according to his infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude, and does what he infallibly knows is most for his glory and the good of the system, or that which supposes just the contrary; namely, "that in fact God does not do what is most for his own glory." Pray read Isa. v. 20.*

A. But "if obedience had not been, upon the whole, for the best, a perfect being could not have enjoined it."

B. The very best things we can aim at, are the glory of God and the good of the system: and the only way we can take, that we may actively promote these ends, is to do as God has bid us: "Love the Lord with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves." Therefore God, the most perfect being, may well enjoin this upon us. About all this there is no dispute. The only question is, what is wisest and best for God to do; to interpose and prevent sin, in all cases; or else, in some cases, to suffer his creatures to sin. If God can promote the glory of God and good of the system, to better advantage by the permission of sin than by hindering it, it is best on the whole for him to permit it; as in the case of Joseph, Pharaoh, and Christ's crucifixion, etc. God could have sent more than twelve legions of angels to rescue Christ out of the hands of

* If God has wise, holy, and good ends in the permission of sin, then he is charged with being "the author of sin." And if he has no good end in the permission of sin, then he does what he knows is "not most for his own glory;" and this is the case with respect to every sin that ever was or will be committed by men or devils. So that, according to this writer, God is the greatest sinner in the universe. For either he is the author of all sin, or, which is no better, acts contrary to his best judgment in the permission of every sin that is committed; doing what he knows is "not most for his own glory." Meanwhile, the devil is represented as the greatest saint; as one who has done most for the advancement of God's glory and good of the universe. The sins of all wicked beings he puts to God's account. He is the "author of all." And the good which God brings out of all is put to their account. So God must answer for all the sin, and the devil and his adherents have the praise of all the good, in the universe. And all this is to set the Scripture doctrine of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, "in the most horrible and deformed light possible."

his enemies; as is plainly intimated in Matt. xxvi. 53, 54: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" This would have disconcerted the infinitely wise plan which God had laid in eternity; of which he had given intimations in the sacred writings of the Old Testament.*

A. But "God, at first, made all rational beings perfect in holiness, and perfect in happiness; which, with me, is a satisfactory evidence that such a state was most for his glory and their happiness."

B. All the evidences you can have merely from this fact must depend upon the truth of this proposition, namely; that "God always does what is most for his own glory and the good of the creation." And if this proposition is true, it will equally prove both that it was best God should "create all rational beings perfect in holiness," as he did at first, and that he should permit some of them to fall, as he did afterwards. I believe the proposition to be true; and I believe both the consequences, which equally follow. You believe the proposition to be true when you think it will serve your turn; but at another time say, "I do doubt whether God in fact does what is most for his own glory."

As God intended before the foundation of the world to per-

* The reason our Savior did not desire his Father to interpose, and effectually hinder that horrid sin the Jews were now about to commit, is very remarkable, and worthy our attentive consideration. It was not because God did not know they would commit that sin if left to themselves; nor because God could not hinder them; nor because they would cease to be moral agents, if hindered; nor because interpositions are inconsistent with the established laws of nature, and the good of the whole in that respect, (according to Ramsey, or Clark, or Turnbull, learned and ingenious writers,) nor because it was not God's original scheme, that Christ should be put to death; but a device of the devil, which God thought himself not concerned to hinder, although he knew his permitting it would not be most to his own glory, (according to the new scheme of our author,) but because it was inconsistent with God's original infinitely wise, holy, and glorious plan, which had subsisted in his own mind from eternity, and which he had revealed in his own word: as his Son from his bosom, who could not be mistaken in this thing, told the Jews. "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" It would have disconcerted God's scheme to have sent twelve legions of angels, and hindered the execution of this wicked design; for God had before determined it should be accomplished. (Acts iv. 27, 28.) Therefore, when the time came for its accomplishment, God permitted the Jews to take their own course: that is, he did not hinder them, as he easily could have done; for he knew it was not best to hinder them; neither most for his glory, nor for the good of the system. And I am persuaded that even our author himself will not venture to say, "I do doubt whether in this God did what was most for his own glory." But if God ever acted wisely in the permission of sin, in any one instance, it overthrows this author's scheme, which supposes such a thing absolutely inconsistent with the divine perfections; and that it makes God the author of sin, and gives the greatest encouragement to all wickedness.

mit sin, for holy and wise ends, it was of the utmost importance, that he should do it under such circumstances that the whole intellectual system might see and know that he did not do it, as looking upon sin as being good in itself, or as tending to good; yea, under such circumstances that his permission of it might not, in the eyes of finite intelligences, lessen, but rather infinitely increase, the horrors of it. Therefore, he not only created all holy at first, but also "forbid sin under the severest penalties;" yea, actually executed the infinitely dreadful penalty on the sinning angels, who were the first transgressors, without mercy. And while he exercised mercy towards fallen man, he did it in such a way as will finally, and on the whole, show his hatred of sin, as much, nay more, than if he had treated them as he did the fallen angels. But while the whole tenor of his conduct thus joins to set his hatred of sin in a most striking light, his actual permission of it, at the same time equally proves, that he did not think it best to prevent it by his own immediate interposition; which demonstrates, that he saw a better way than that to advance his own glory and the good of the system. In what respects his present method is better than that, I have endeavored to show in my Sermons. But while you take for granted, that God could not wisely permit sin, unless he looked upon sin as in itself good, you run yourself into the utmost confusion; and even necessitate yourself to believe, either that God thinks sin a good thing, or that God did not act wisely, "did not do what was most for his own glory," in permitting it.

A. "Best to stand, and best to fall; best to obey, and best to rebel; sound at least like contradictions."

B. Many propositions may "sound like contradictions," which are perfectly consistent; for the same thing may be best, and not best, in different respects. As to the crucifixion of Christ, for instance, it may be said, it was best to be, and best not to be. For the death of Christ, considering the good to be brought out of it, was a most glorious event; but the death of Christ, considered as a murder committed by the spiteful Jews, was a very horrid crime. So it was best that Joseph should be sold, considered as one step towards that advancement which God designed; but it was not best, considered as an effectual means to prevent his advancement, as his brethren intended it. So, it might be best that Adam should fall, if in the eyes of the omniscient God, the only proper judge, his fall would give opportunity for infinite wisdom to bring more glory to God and good to the system than otherwise could be; but it was not best, merely as an act of open rebellion against the

Maker and Lord of all things; subjecting all this lower world to ruin.

A. But the Holy Scriptures assure us, God is so far from thinking it best that sin should be, that rather it grieves him to the heart. "And it repented the Lord that he made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at the heart;" namely, because they had become so exceeding wicked. Wherefore the Lord destroyed the earth by a flood.

B. That sin, in itself, is infinitely disagreeable to the divine nature, is granted. That it was nevertheless best that sin should be, with a view to the good to be brought out of it by God, and that therefore God acted agreeably to all his perfections in the permission of it, is still affirmed. Nor do these words, considered with their context, militate against, but rather greatly confirm, this truth.

For the true sense of those words is plainly this, namely, that the sinful state of mankind before the flood was in itself infinitely disagreeable to God, who is an infinitely holy and benevolent being; and viewed therefore merely in itself, had the greatest tendency, in fact, to grieve and distress the Holy One; and make him sincerely repent that ever he made the world. And therefore, were things always to be so, and no good ever to come of it, he never would have made the world; nor would he have continued it in being when made, to grieve his heart, and wear out his life with continual sorrow; infinitely vexed and grieved, crossed and disappointed, in a continued series of wickedness, from the beginning to the end of the world. Therefore, as these words, in the strongest manner, express the infinite holiness and goodness of the divine nature, so they are quite favorable to the present truth. For, if God does really look upon sin in this light, why did he ever make the world, as he knew how things would issue? Or, why did not he destroy all mankind at the general deluge, as he knew what they were, and how they would prove afterwards — their imaginations evil from their youth, — and make a new world, and people it with a better race, which he might have done with infinite ease? The plain and only answer which we can possibly give to these questions, is, that although sin was so infinitely disagreeable to the divine nature, considered in itself, yet, on the whole, he chose the present plan, with a view to the infinitely greater good he knew he could, and would, bring out of all this evil; and so all this evil, in the issue, be but like the drops of rain, in which the rainbow is formed, when the sun breaks forth in his strength — an emblem of the Sun of Righteousness — and as the blackness of a

cloud after a storm, which does but add beauty and brightness to the rainbow, which the Most High appointed as a token of his covenant, and which, perhaps, as an hieroglyphic, was designed to suggest the true reason of God's continuing the world in being. Therefore, when Noah, after the flood, offered sacrifice, a type of the great sacrifice of Christ; that seed of the woman, which was, by heaven's high decree, to bruise the serpent's head, and by superior wisdom turn all his mischief to greater good, the only way to crush the head and forever perfectly subdue that old serpent, which is the devil—I say, therefore, when Noah, according to divine institution, offered sacrifice, and brought into view the great Messiah, and all his glorious work, God was well pleased; good will come out of evil. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor;" (in the Hebrew, *a savor of rest.*) God's heart was now well pleased. "And the Lord said in his heart," (as being perfectly pleased with his perfect plan, upon the whole,) "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." As if he had said, "I know mankind will be as bad as ever. However, I will destroy them no more; but continue summer and winter, seed time and harvest, for the benefit of the human race; because the seed of the woman will, in the issue, bruise the serpent's head, disappoint his whole scheme, and bring greater good out of all this evil."

But to return to the sense you put on the text. It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart. But, dear sir, why repent and be grieved at the heart, that he made man; and yet after all continue this race in being; and so practically prefer the present plan before any other, when, of all possible plans, he still had his choice; and the very best, by one word's speaking, you think, might with infinite ease have been, by him, brought into existence; and so, he be perfectly pleased forever? Or, when all mankind, but eight, were destroyed by the flood, it had been an easy thing to have destroyed them, and so made thorough work; and to have created another Adam and Eve, and effectually prevented their fall; and so have had all things perfectly to his mind. To be grieved with and repent of his old plan, considered on the whole, and yet to go on with it at the same time, when, of all possible plans, he still had his choice, even at the flood, is perfectly inconsistent. Your sense of the words, therefore, sir, cannot be right; and unless you will make the Holy One of Israel inconsistent with himself, you must come into the sense which I have given.

But we have had enough, quite enough, of this kind of objections. I wish you would urge something more directly to the purpose. Pray prove, if you can, either that God has not in fact permitted sin; or that he is not an absolutely perfect being; for if both these are true, a thousand objections cannot overthrow the doctrine of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin. Rather, you will be found fighting against God; which, as you own, is an "extremely dangerous" thing.

A. I do not choose to say that, in fact, God has not permitted sin; but this I am bold to say, that there is not "one single Scripture text" which teaches that God ever permitted sin, in one single instance, with a view to the good that he intended to bring out of it.

B. Well, this is to the purpose, indeed, were it true. But it is strange that a man, with his Bible in his hands, and his eyes in his head, should ever say so. Ye thought evil against me, says Joseph to his brethren. "Your design in what was done, was an evil design; but God's design, in what was done, was a good design. God meant it unto good;" which, it is plain, refers not to God's after act, but to his original intention. God meant it; that is, God meant I should be sold. He meant it as much as you did. Your scheme was to prevent my advancement. But God meant it unto good; that is, "God intended that event should come to pass, to answer the good ends he had in view." What can be plainer?

But if you want another instance, you may have it in Pharaoh; where the expressions used are much stronger than such as I have been wont to use, as indeed Scripture expressions relative to this subject generally are, and evidently take in some ideas over and above a mere permission, as I have explained that word. For God not only left Pharaoh to the hardness of his own heart, but ordered external circumstances so as, considering Pharaoh's temper, God knew would infallibly strengthen his obstinacy; particularly in suffering the magicians to imitate several of the miracles of Moses, and from time to time removing the plagues, and so giving opportunity for Pharaoh to regain his courage, and renew his opposition. And God plainly intended by all, that things should be carried to such an extremity as they were, that he might the better answer his own holy, wise, and glorious ends. Yea, God expressly declares, that this was his design. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, they are en-

tangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall follow after them, and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord."

When God first sent Moses into Egypt to Pharaoh, he told him beforehand, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go." And the whole scheme is opened in Exod. x. 1, 2, where nothing can be plainer than that God had holy and wise ends in view in all he did. "I have," says the Holy One of Israel, "hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants." But for what end? "That I might show these my signs before him." But to what purpose? "And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them." And all for what? "That ye may know that I am the Lord:"—compared with chap. ix. 16. "And in very deed," says God himself, "for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." But as it is of importance to know in what light the holy Scriptures set this subject, pray read and compare Gen. xv. 12—16; xlv. 5—8; l. 20. Ex. iii. 18—20; iv. 21; vii. 3, 4, 5, 13; ix. 12, 16; x. 1, 2, 20, 27; xi. 9, 10; xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 17, 18. Deut. ii. 30. Josh. xi. 20. 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12; xvi. 10, 11, 21, 22. 1 Kings xi. 9, 14, 23, 26—39; xii. 15; xxii. 19—23. 2 Kings xxiv. 20. 2 Chron. x. 15; xxv. 20; xxxii. 31. Job. i. 6—12, 21, 22; ii. 1—6, 10. Ps. cv. 17, 25. Isa. x. 5—15. Jer. xxv. 9; xxvii. 1—7; li. 20—25. Matt. xxvi. 53, 54. Luke xxii. 21, 22; xxiv. 25—27. John xix. 24, 33—37. Acts ii. 23; iii. 18; iv. 24—28. Rom. ix. 18, 22, 23; xi. 7—11. 1 Cor. xi. 19. 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. Rev. xvii. 17. Pray read these "Scripture texts," my friend, and then tell me whether the doctrine of God's permitting sin for wise, and holy, and good ends, be from heaven or of men.

A. As to the affair of Joseph, which you so much insist upon, I grant, it was by infinite wisdom overruled for good. But, however, it is not at all "to your purpose."

B. But, sir, perhaps others will think it much to the purpose. For, if God has, in only one instance, permitted sin for wise and holy ends, it is at least possible that he may have done so in all instances. And if he always acts like himself, no doubt this is, in fact, the very case.

Besides, if God did permit sin in the affair of Joseph, for wise and good ends, all your ten objections are answered at once; and indeed the substance of your book; unless you will adopt the very absurdities you pretend to abhor, and maintain for truth, "that God was the author of that sin, and loved it; and that Joseph's brethren acted like the greatest saints in that affair; had no cause to mourn for their sin, nor their father to lament his want of success in the education of his children, or to be at all grieved for their wickedness; yea, that their sin was no sin, but rather a virtue. And if Jacob or Joseph approved and admired the wisdom of God in that affair, it must argue, that they had very unworthy conceptions of God, to think he could not bring about his good designs without suffering so much evil; and had they been consistent with themselves, they must have turned infidels; or at least have discarded all those texts of Scripture which represent God as hating sin, being grieved with it, and angry because of it. If in fact God did permit Joseph to be sold, meaning it unto good; if this was God's scheme, in such a sense as that Joseph might justly say, "God sent me hither," then may you do well to reconsider your own words, with application to yourself; "if the present scheme be God's, it would be extremely dangerous opposing it; and argue the highest vanity, arrogance, and impiety." It is plain fact, that Joseph viewed and considered that whole affair as God's scheme, as much as I do, and uses as strong expressions as I have any where done. Only read Gen. xlv. 5—8, and be impartial.

A. But "it is not parallel in one material circumstance. Nay, the case is wholly different, and therefore quite foreign to the purpose; for all concerned in the conduct and consequences of that affair were in a state of sin, and therefore deserved all the chastisements they received. They had all blemishes in their characters, which may easily account for their sufferings."

B. True, "they deserved their sufferings;" nor did God ever inflict pain, no, not the least degree of it, in any one instance in the whole intellectual system, but in which it was deserved, as much as they deserved their sufferings. To be sure, we in this world "are in a state of sin," and deserve our sufferings, and need our chastisements, as much as they did; nor did God begin to chastise us, until after we had become sinners.

If you should say, "that Joseph's brethren deserved to be chastised for their pride and envy; and that therefore God left them to themselves, to fall into that sin, that he might in the issue humble them, and bring them to a better mind;" this

would overthrow your whole scheme. For, according to this, God did permit sin for wise and holy ends — the very point that I affirm, and the very point that you deny.

Or, if you should say, "However, as they were sinners, God might justly leave them to sin; but God could not, consistent with justice, leave innocent beings to sin;" this would suppose that God was obliged, in justice, to keep all innocent beings from falling; and consequently, that God's permitting sin was an act of injustice; and consequently, that God is not a just being.

Or, if you should only say, that "they had provoked God to leave them, but innocent beings had not," it is easy to observe that, according to Scripture account, God permitted Joseph to be sold, not so much in anger at Joseph or Jacob's family, as out of love to them, for their good. As it is written, "God meant it unto good." God had his own glory and the general good in view, in that affair, just as I suppose he had in suffering our first parents to fall.

Or, if I should grant, "God suffered Joseph's brethren to fall into that sin out of anger at them, as was doubtless the case with Pharaoh, when God suffered him to pursue Israel into the Red Sea;" yet it is plain that, in both cases, he had his own glory and the general good in view; and so both cases are analogous to his conduct relative to the whole system, for substance. And only granting, what none deny, that it was no injustice to innocent beings for God to permit them to fall, there is no "material difference" which at all hurts the "parallel," for the "purpose" for which it is used in my Sermons. For this is my argument, as I just now stated it, — "If in some instances God permits sin for wise and holy ends, it is possible he may in all. And if he always acts like himself, then, no doubt, in fact, he always does." An argument you have no way to answer, but by giving up the absolute perfection of the divine nature.*

A. But Joseph needed humbling, and to have his corruptions mortified. Holy beings did not need to be humbled, and had no corruptions to mortify.

B. Finite intelligences, holy as they originally were, needed

* "Because God educes many happy consequences from moral evil in this state, therefore, he thought best that moral evil should be," is a false principle, this author says, I had laid down. But let the principle be true or false, it is all his own. I never laid it down, nor built any part of my reasoning upon it. My argument is stated above in brief, and at large in my Sermon, and is entirely different; and, for aught appears, is absolutely unanswerable on this side downright atheism, or, which is the same thing, the denial of the existence of an absolutely perfect being. For, if there is such a being, he cannot but "always act like himself." And then the consequence is plain.

to have their holy biases further confirmed; as is plain from the apostasy of some of them. And they were capable of vast and almost infinite improvements in knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness; and the greater advantages for improvement afforded them, the swifter would be their progress; as was observed in the Sermons, against which you object.

A. But I affirm, there might have been as great advantages for all divine improvements in the intellectual system, if sin and misery had been forever unknown, as on the present plan.

B. This, sir, you can never prove. And as the infinitely wise God has chosen the present plan, we ought, in honor to his wisdom, and as we would not give up the moral rectitude of his nature, to believe it to be the best. For, as St. Augustine saith, "Unless it were good that there should be evil, it would by no means be permitted by the Almighty God, who is able to hinder the commission of that evil, if he would." — *Enchirid.*, cap. 95.

A. But it is "to limit the Holy One of Israel," to say, that he could not manifest and communicate himself to finite intelligences on any other plan, so well as this.

B. No, sir; but rather, if infinite wisdom has chosen the best, it is the highest arrogance in us to say there might have been a better. It is to set up our wisdom above God's; and to say that God did not mean to choose the best, is gross blasphemy — as has been fully demonstrated.

A. However, for my part, I cannot see any good end, but what might have been as well, nay, infinitely better answered, if sin and misery had been forever unknown.

B. That is, you have lived in God's world, perhaps these forty years, his works before your eyes, his word in your hands; and while the inhabitants of heaven, in the view of the divine conduct, are constantly crying, "the whole earth is full of his glory;" to you, it is all as dark as Egypt. You see no wisdom in God's present plan; yea, it appears infinitely to God's dishonor, and to the damage of the system; so that you are even tempted to look upon almost the whole of it, as the "scheme of the devil." And when you see how God permits the devil to practise and prosper, you are ready to doubt whether the Holy One of Israel so much as means to do that which he knows is most for his own glory!

A. But the hypothesis you go upon is entirely false, namely, that it was worth while, that all the misery which is or ever will be in the system, should be merely to give holy beings a higher relish for their own happiness. Just as if a view of misery, as such, were the chief source of the happiness of

heaven; and a view of the vengeance of God and misery of the creature, the most ravishing sight in the universe. A shocking scheme!

B. Yes, sir, a shocking scheme indeed; but it is one of your own invention. It is none of mine.

I believe that "love is the sum of God's moral perfections;" and in one sense — an ill sense — there is no such thing as vengeance in the divine nature. I believe, that love is the very essence of vindictive justice. "Love to God, to virtue, to the best good of the system, bearing down, in a wise and righteous manner, the enemies of God, of virtue, and of the system," is the definition I gave of it in my Sermons. "An amiable perfection in the deity." And I believe, that the chief advantages which will accrue to holy beings from a view of the misery of the damned, will be, as the Scriptures teach, (Rom. ix. 22,) to give them the most lively and affecting sense of the glorious perfections of the divine nature, namely, boundless power, holiness, and goodness; or, in other words, God's infinite hatred of sin, and ability to punish it, and the infinite riches of his grace in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. For it is a view, not of deformity, but of beauty; not of misery, as such, but of the glorious perfections of the divine nature, manifested in the moral government of the world; an absolutely perfect plan, which is the source of the happiness of the heavenly state. And I believe, that it is love to God, to virtue, and to the best good of the system, which is the chief source of the exalted joys of the heavenly inhabitants; who, on a view of the just punishment of God's obstinate enemies, cry, "Amen, Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Again they said, Hallelujah. And her smoke rose up forever and ever. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come." They do not rejoice in their misery as such, nor in their misery as giving themselves a higher relish for their own happiness; but they rejoice to see God exalted, his authority vindicated, his law honored, sin discountenanced, Satan and his cause subdued, and the Messiah victorious. And this "tremendous scene, by way of contrast, tends to give the most affecting sense of all the divine perfections, as shining forth in the work of redemption — the most glorious of all God's works. So that, upon the whole, the saved will be under the best advantages forever to have a fresh remembrance of what they once were; to see what they deserved; where they might have been; what God has done; and to behold all his glorious perfections as shining through all his works of mercy and of justice, in a light infinitely bright, and

under circumstances most suited to engage their attention, and affect their hearts, and to give them the highest sense of their dependence on God, and obligations to him; so that they will have the best means to make the swiftest progress in divine knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness forever." But you must be referred to my Sermons, where these points are more fully discussed than my intended brevity will now admit.

A. But, "had we a just sense of the worth of our mercies, could we need any thing to raise it higher?" And was our gratitude equal to the worth of our mercies, could we need any thing to make us more thankful? that is, if we were perfect, could we be more than perfect?

B. That perfect intelligences in heaven may and will make progress in holiness and happiness forever, you may see proved at large by Dr. Watts on "The Happiness of Separate Spirits." It is too plain a case to admit of dispute. For the favor granted to the meanest inhabitant of heaven, being of eternal duration, is of infinite worth. And so he never can have a full sense of its worth; or exercise a degree of gratitude equal to its worth; that is, be as thankful to God for it, as it deserves; no, not if his progress in a grateful disposition, if I may compare things spiritual to things natural, should be eternally as swift as a ray of light from the sun.

A. But it is a reflection upon the intellectual system, to suppose they stood in need of this "tremendous scene" for their instruction, or confirmation.* And a reflection upon "the benevolent Father of the universe," to suppose, that he really chose "this awful expedient," when there was no need of it; when all good ends might have been answered as well without it; nay, infinitely better, infinitely more to the honor of God, and the good of the system. "The benevolent Father of the

* If a consideration of the dreadful consequences of sin is of no use to confirm holy beings, as this author thinks, why was death threatened to deter Adam from sin? If a mere threatening tends to deter, much more an actual execution. Since Satan and his hosts were driven out of heaven, down to an eternal hell, for sin; and Adam turned out of Paradise, and all this lower world doomed to death, for the first transgression; there has not been one instance of the apostasy of a holy being in all God's dominions. This author seems to think that, because holy beings love God supremely, therefore they love themselves not at all; which is contrary to reason and to Scripture. (Gen. ii. 17. Heb. xii. 2.) However, he attempts to prove the point, from 1 John iv. 18: "Perfect love casteth out fear." Although it is plain from the context, that the perfect love there spoken of, is nothing more than that high degree of love, to which some good men attain in this life; which, although it delivers them from that fear which arises from want of evidence of their good estate, yet by no means tends to set them above being moved to watch and pray, from a sense of the infinitely dreadful consequences of sin, as is plain from Luke xxi. 36; Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. ix. 27.

universe wanted neither power nor will, in ways inconceivable to us, to raise his creatures' happiness to the highest possible degrees, without this awful expedient."

B. If the benevolent Father of the universe wanted neither power nor will to lay and prosecute the very wisest plan, then, to a demonstration, God's present plan is such — "a most glorious expedient!" And if the all-wise God knew, that of all possible plans this was the best, most adapted to the finite capacities of finite intelligences, and most suitable to answer all the good ends he had in view, then, without any reflection upon the intellectual system or upon himself, he might prefer the present plan to all others, as in fact he has. And you say, "that you cannot pretend to prove, to a demonstration, that the present scheme is not in fact the best." Wherefore, since God has in fact chosen it before all others, and is so "benevolent that he cannot want a will" to choose the best, I appeal to you, I appeal to the world, which becomes us, as we would be consistent with ourselves, or regard the honor of "the benevolent Father of the universe," either to believe it to be best because it is God's, or to "doubt whether God has in fact done what is most for his own glory" in this affair!

A. But "would not the least reflection have assured them, that if God delighted in truth, holiness, and justice, he must hate the contrary? — that if he rewarded the loyal, he must punish the disobedient?"

B. Doubtless the angels that sinned had, before their fall, time for some reflection; but it is not to be supposed, that they sinned in a full and certain assurance of being driven immediately out of heaven into an eternal hell. It is certain our first parents had time for reflection, and did reflect; but their "assurance of God's holiness, truth, and justice," was not sufficient, in the hour of temptation, to make them believe "he would punish the disobedient." For although God had expressly declared, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," yet Satan persuaded them to believe they should be as gods, and to disobey their Maker in expectation thereof. Those are facts; and facts are stubborn things. How know we, therefore, but that God saw it really necessary, for the best good of his eternal kingdom, that he should have opportunity to exemplify all his perfections in his conduct, in the manner he does on the present plan? After the present "grand drama" is finished, at the day of judgment, a sense of all the divine perfections will be impressed almost infinitely deeper, on the minds of holy beings, than when they first came into existence. Then they believed, that God was true; but now they will see it and know

it. Then they believed, that God hated sin and would punish it; but now, while Satan and all his adherents are forever tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone, in their presence, before their eyes, it will give them quite a new sense of God's "holiness, justice, and truth," and an inconceivably greater "assurance that he will punish the disobedient." And if the holiness and happiness of heaven arise from the knowledge of God, the better they know him the more holy and happy will they be. Besides, God has had opportunity to exemplify his faithfulness as to his promises, as well as his truth in his threatenings; and that in a great variety of instances, since the beginning of the world. And when at last all holy beings shall see all God's past promises fulfilled to a tittle, it will give them the highest assurance of the fulfilment of what will then remain; namely, of their secure enjoyment of the glories and joys of heaven to all eternity. And they will believe it, and as it were see it, and enjoy it, all at once.

A. But "would not the least reflection have given holy beings all that knowledge of the divine perfections which was 'essential' to their holiness and happiness, without this tremendous scene?"

B. As soon as they began to think, they would begin to know God, and love him, and rejoice in him. And the more they thought of him, the more their knowledge, love, and joy, would be increased. But yet there would be an infinite degree of perfection, glory, and beauty in God, still unseen. Their knowledge, love, and joy, although free from sinful defects, were capable of an eternal increase. And the more completely and clearly the divine nature should be exhibited to their view in the divine conduct, the swifter progress would they make. And if the present plan gives God opportunity to make the brightest and fullest manifestations of himself, then it is, in this respect, of all possible plans the best; and holy beings will know more of God, and so love him more, and rejoice more in him. But these thoughts are largely dwelt upon in my Sermons, to which you may be referred.

A. But could not these and all other ends have been answered as well "in ways inconceivable to us, without this awful expedient?"

B. Can you conceive — pray think a little, and try — of any possible way wherein the divine perfections might have been set in so full, clear, and affecting a light, and so well adapted to engross the whole attention of all holy beings, and fill them with the most exalted thoughts of the divine majesty, as that which God has taken in the work of redemption by the death

of his own Son? But you say, there may be "ways inconceivable to us." True; but not inconceivable to God: for all possible ways lay open to his view, and he had his choice, and in fact he has chosen the present plan; but if this had not been the best expedient, God would not have preferred it to all others; because, on your own concession, he is "the benevolent Father of the universe, who wants neither power nor will" to choose and accomplish, of all possible plans, the best. And, to call this "an awful expedient," as though it were the very worst in nature, which "the benevolent Father of the universe" esteems the best, casts no small reproach on the infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude of the Holy One of Israel. But, dear sir, is it not true, that however we feel, and whatever we say, yet God will in fact abide by his original choice, and prosecute and accomplish his original scheme, and no other plan, conceivable or inconceivable, will ever be adopted; nor will God ever own, however boldly we may push the charge, that he does not do "what is most for his own glory;" but rather, having endured with all long-suffering the ill treatment of an apostate world, his own Son will at last come, with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, and all the inhabitants of heaven will cry, Amen, hallelujah!

A. All this I had for substance heard before, and I looked upon it "infinitely worse than nothing." Yea, I durst boldly tell the world, that I was "ready to embrace the Manichean principles," rather than to come into your opinion.

B. The Manicheans maintained, that there was an evil principle, or being, independent on God, and superior to his control, which loved and promoted evil for its own sake, and, consequently, that a great part of the present system is, and eternally will be, evil: answer no good end, but be absolutely evil. On the contrary, I maintain, that the whole universe is entirely under the government of a Being infinitely good; and that, consequently, there is not, nor ever will be, any evil in the universe but what shall answer good ends upon the whole; that is to say, there is no absolute evil in the universe. Now, which of these two schemes is the best, most agreeable to a holy and truly benevolent mind?

That there is much evil, much sin and misery, in the universe now, and forever will be, we are both agreed. The grand question is whether, upon the whole, all will be overruled for good, or not; for if it will, no doubt God originally intended it should be, and conducted as he did with that in view.

Now, since it is plain fact that sin and misery do take place

in the system, methinks every one, who is a friend to God and to the system, should rejoice with all his heart to hear that the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head, bring glory to God, and good to the system, out of all the evil that ever has taken place, or ever will, — and the more good the better, — and so completely disappoint the devil.*

* What can there be in human nature to incline one to feel easier in the belief, that God had no good end in view in the permission of sin, and that no good will ever come out of it? I will put it to my own case. I am a sinner; I have acted freely in sinning; God's decrees never influenced me to sin; God's permitting, or not hindering, did not influence me; I acted as I chose; no fault on God's part; all the blame lies on me. If I go on impenitent, and die in my sins, I only am to blame; if I am an enemy to God, and to the system, and to all good, I deserve to be cast off by God; and the whole system may, on good grounds, say, Amen, hallelujah! And if my eternal destruction is perfectly right and just, I have in fact no reason to complain. And now, if I do perish, and perish justly, why should I be loath that God should bring glory to himself, and good to the system, out of my sin and ruin? He did so in the instance of Pharaoh; and to Moses, the divine conduct appeared exceedingly glorious. (Exod. xv.) And if I deserve eternal destruction, as much as Pharaoh did to be drowned, why should I be loath it should be overruled to as much good? Because I am no friend to God or to the system, but the contrary. There can be no other reason. For if I loved God and the system, I should be glad to have God glorified, and the system instructed by my example, if I must be punished for my crimes; as sometimes a penitent malefactor on the gallows, from benevolence to his fellow-creatures, may sincerely wish the spectators might take warning by him. But to the impenitent sinner, who is an enemy to God, and to the system, and to all good, and who sees not the great evil of sin, nor his desert of damnation, and cares only for himself, things must appear in a very different light. Had Pharaoh, for instance, whom St. Paul views as a specimen of obstinate sinners in general, at the bottom of the Red Sea, heard the Hebrews sing, "the Lord hath triumphed gloriously;" and upon it remembered the word once sent to him, "for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth:" it would have been a comfort to him "infinitely worse than nothing." If he must be drowned, he had infinitely rather it should answer no such end. Yea, nothing could be more opposed to the temper of his heart, or put him to greater pain. To think that, in the midst of all his haughtiness, he had been in God's hand, as clay in the hands of the potter; to see that all his proud opposition to the Almighty had but exactly accomplished the plan which was in God's mind in the days of Abraham, three or four hundred years before he was born, (Gen. xv. 12—16,) or had done good or evil; to consider that God's last end was "to show his power, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth;" and that his elected, his chosen people, the Hebrews, whom he hated, "might tell it to their sons, and to their sons' sons, what God had done, that they might know that he was the Lord" — this, O Pharaoh, was the wise and glorious end God had in view, in permitting thee to harden thy heart, and run such a great length in wickedness! And in this view, the conduct of the God of Israel towards thee will be approved of, and adored, by all holy beings in the intellectual system forever. "O horrible!" cries Pharaoh: "this way of accounting for it appears to me infinitely worse than nothing."

N. B. If I can heartily approve of the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, I can just as well towards all obstinate sinners. If I cannot approve of the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, my quarrel is not with this or that Calvinistic divine; but with the God of Israel. And whether the fault is in God, or in me, will be known by all the world at the day of judgment, when the righteousness of all God's ways will be laid open before the whole intellectual system. And if such doctrines tend to make me turn infidel, I am, at heart, an infidel already; yea, an enemy to the God that made and governs the world. But, to use the words

Pray, my friend, what think you? When Joseph was in fact sold; that wicked deed actually committed; which of the two would good Jacob have chosen; either that no good should ever be brought out of that evil, or that it should be made the occasion of a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand times more good, in the whole, than to counterbalance the damage done to his family?* Joseph's wicked brethren wished no good might come of it; but I dare say that neither the God that made them, nor the father who begat them, were of that spirit. No, God meant it unto good; and Jacob was even ravished with joy, when God's glorious designs began to open to his view.

Indeed, sir, perhaps it may be the opinion of all judicious men, that the Manichean scheme, bad as it is, is still preferable to yours. For they supposed that God would have ordered the affairs of the whole universe in the wisest, best, and most perfect manner, if he could; but he was so counteracted by the evil principle, that he could not; so that even they believed that God's intention was good. But you think God never designed to do what he knew was most for his glory, although he could have done it with infinite ease, and had not one motive against it, but all possible motives, of infinite weight, for it. But want of natural power is not a defect so ill, by infinite odds, as want of moral rectitude.

Yea, my friend, what if it should be thought that your scheme is little, if any, better than downright atheism? To be sure, if your scheme is true, all religion is overthrown. For if God has suffered infinite evil and mischief to come into his own world, a world absolutely under his government, in which he doth according to his pleasure, absolutely without any good end; yea, contrary to his better judgment, and when he could easily have hindered it; he is infinitely far from being

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of our author, "we ought to be disposed to acquiesce in the account of this matter which we have from him who cannot err, in the oracles of inspiration." A way of accounting for the divine conduct, that will afford "libertines" and all obstinate sinners, an "encouragement" to continue in sin, which is "infinitely worse than nothing," as this author himself must be sensible.

* If so much good was brought out of evil, in the affair of Joseph, why may it not be so as to the system in general? or why should it be thought unlikely, when it would be just like God to do it? The very unlikeliest thing that could happen, has already happened. The Son of God has died. And how gloriously that affair will issue, in which the Creator of the universe was so infinitely engaged as to become incarnate and die, I am of the opinion, never yet entered into the heart of the most exalted angel in heaven fully to conceive. And however the author of the "Attempt," like the unbelieving lord in Samaria, is ready now to ridicule the thought of such great good; yet if he may be so happy, and God grant that he may, as to be an everlasting partaker of it himself, and join in the new song which none can learn but the redeemed, I doubt not he will then be of a very different mind.

an absolutely perfect being, as has been proved; nor can any holy, truly benevolent being in the universe, heartily love him, or cordially acquiesce in his government; for it is strictly impossible that absolute evil should be acquiesced in by a good being; for it implies a contradiction. And if all holy beings cease to love God, and acquiesce in his government, there is an end to all religion.

A. But, sir, I pray you carefully to mind that I say it, and insist upon it, that "sin is not God's scheme, but a device of the devil." It is "no part of God's original scheme."

B. And I pray, sir, what do you mean by this manner of speaking? Do you mean only "that it was the devil that sinned, and not God; that other wicked beings sin, and not God; and that sinning creatures act freely, and are solely and wholly to blame?" All this is exactly true; but not at all to your purpose; for the question is not, who is it that has sinned, God, or the creature; about this there is no dispute. The creature, and none but the creature, has sinned. But the question is, why did the infinitely wise and holy Creator and Governor of the world permit the creature to sin, when he could easily have hindered it? To this question, you say nothing; only "that you do not believe that God is obliged to do, or that in fact he actually does, what is most for his own glory," which is really to give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature.

Or do you mean, "that it was God's original intention and design, that sin should never happen; and that God did all he could to prevent it; but unawares the devil laid a scheme, and overmatched the Almighty; and by craft or power brought it in, notwithstanding all God could do; and so God's scheme was disconcerted, and he disappointed, and his world in a great measure ruined, in spite of the utmost exertion of his infinite wisdom and almighty power?" Some of your readers, perhaps, may think this your meaning; but it cannot be, if you mean to be consistent with yourself; for, according to this, God did all he could to secure his own glory — which is a point you do not believe.

And yet this must be your meaning, or what you say is not at all to the purpose; for if God knew sin was likely to happen, and could have hindered it, and yet in fact did not; the whole question remains entirely unanswered, namely, Why did God permit sin?

The truth, perhaps, was, you had no distinct meaning at all, in saying, that "sin is not God's scheme, but a device of the devil."

A. Indeed, sir, I was greatly "embarrassed." Expressly to deny, that God permits sin, I durst not do. To justify his conduct, I could not; yea, I esteemed you guilty of great vanity and presumption in pretending to do it. It was my opinion, "that no satisfactory account could be given" of the divine conduct in this affair; for I imagined, that in very deed God had not in this affair done that which would have been "most for his glory" to have done.*

B. However, I hope, by this time, you are thoroughly convinced, that whether we can find out the reasons of the divine conduct in this affair or not, yet it is of the utmost importance that we firmly believe that God has acted wisely, and in a manner agreeable to all his glorious perfections; for it is an affair of so great moment, and so infinitely interesting, that if we habitually believe that God acted contrary to his better judgment in it, we must entirely give up the absolute perfection of his nature. And if God is not an absolutely perfect being, he is not God. We may compliment him with the name, but we take away the thing. "We Christains," saith Origen, "say, that God can do nothing which is in itself evil, no more than he is able not to be God; for if God do any evil, he is not God. God willeth nothing unbecoming himself; this is inconsistent with his Godship." (See Dr. Cudworth's *Intel. Syst.*, p. 874.) Agreeable to Holy Scripture, "He cannot deny himself." "It is impossible for God to lie." And if we give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature, and so ungod the deity, it will become impossible, were our hearts ever so holy, to love, worship, and trust in him as God, as an absolutely perfect being; or rejoice in his universal government, and be sincerely glad that he is at the head of the creation, and can and will do according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and amongst

* This author speaks of "resting in the natural and easy account we have of this affair in the sacred Scriptures, and of finding satisfaction and repose therein, which he supposes "the heart of every good man does." But, pray, what rest, what repose, what satisfaction, can he, or any man of common sense, "good," or "not good," find in believing, that in this affair God has done "what was in fact not most for his own glory?" — which he thinks is the true state of the case. And when he was so "embarrassed" himself, why should he desire to embarrass others likewise? And after so serious and repeated professions, that he meant to propose his thoughts with the greatest modesty and humility, why did he, instead of a serious answer to the late President Edwards's reasonings on this subject, to which I had referred, rather cry out, "Boasted metaphysics"? "Several professors in the Dutch universities have sent him their thanks" for that book; and how could the "modest, humble temper" of this gentleman prompt him to ridicule what the learned world so much admire? He had a right to answer it, if he could; but if he could not, to ridicule it will but render himself ridiculous, and it is a pity he should not know it. The candid reader is desired carefully to peruse what Mr. Edwards has said on this subject, in his book on Freedom, &c., p. 252—267.

the inhabitants of the earth. Yea, it would be a thing infinitely desirable, that some better being, some absolutely perfect being, might be in his place and take his throne. And so your scheme really justifies a spirit of discontent and rebellion throughout all God's dominions. But this idea of the divine majesty, which is harbored in many a heart in this apostate world, is of the nature of blasphemy, the abominable thing which God's soul hates, and ought to be entirely rooted out of our minds.

A. "I think it of much greater importance for us to endeavor to get sin out of the world, than fruitlessly to inquire how it came in."

B. A great part of the wickedness of this God-hating world consists in hard thoughts and hard speeches against God. (Jude 15.) Therefore "sin cannot be got out of the world" till men are brought to think well of God, and of all his ways; at least, so far as to put an implicit trust and confidence in him, as an absolutely perfect being, fit to be at the head of the universe, and to have the management and ordering of all the affairs of the whole system in his hands.

It is in vain to pretend to make men holy, without love to God; for it is the first and greatest part of holiness, to love God; and the chief foundation of all religion. And it is impossible men should love God while they habitually believe that there is no God — that is, no being of absolute perfection at the head of the universe, ordering all things in the wisest and best manner. (Ps. xiv. 1, 2.)

A. Sir, I did think my "Attempt" an unanswerable piece; and that I had a good right in the most public manner to call upon you to "retract." But, "upon the whole, I think myself under the strongest engagements to make the most grateful acknowledgments for so distinguishing a favor as your reply to my remarks." Indeed, the permission of sin has always appeared to me as an unaccountable affair. I could never see how God could do it, consistent with his own glory or the good of the system, or consistent even with his own perfect happiness; as a being of infinite benevolence, I thought, must have had "greater pleasure" if sin and misery had been forever unknown in his world; therefore, I thought that "sin was not God's scheme, but a device of the devil." And because it is plain fact, that God has not hindered the devil from doing all this mischief, as he might easily have done, I have been led "to doubt whether God does in fact, and so whether he is obliged," from the absolute perfection of his nature, "to do what is most for his glory." You see my whole scheme, and you have

replied to the whole and every part of it; but if, after all, I should feel not satisfied, what shall I do?

B. I will tell you, sir, what to do; and may the Lord give you a hearing ear, and an understanding heart.

1. Be firmly persuaded, that not the devil, but God, and God alone, is the absolute governor of the world.

Reason teaches, that God never will, and never can, voluntarily give up the government of his own world into the hands of his greatest and most avowed enemy, the devil. And if the devil is one of God's creatures, as God himself has taught us in his word, he is so inferior to the God that made him, as to be in his hands, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, absolutely at his control; unable by power or policy to bring any thing to pass, but by the permission of the great God, who from heaven hath declared, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;" and whose schemes cannot possibly be disconcerted by the united powers of earth and hell. Nay, the powers of darkness are so entirely at the control of the Almighty, that Satan could not touch holy Job, or any part of his substance, nor so much as put a lie in the mouth of Ahab's lying prophets, without the divine permission; nor could the affrighted devils so much as enter into the herd of swine, till our Savior said, Go. How then could the devil seduce our first parents, and break up God's original plan, and ruin his new-made world, in spite of the utmost exertion of infinite wisdom and almighty power?

The whole tenor of divine revelation leads us to believe that the providence of God extends to all things which come to pass. If the devil or wicked men were not under the divine control, we should have reason to fear them; but our Savior assures us, they cannot hurt a hair of our heads without God's permission, whose providence extends even to the very sparrows, a bird so insignificant, that two of them were sold for a farthing; and much more to the concerns of men, who are of more value than many sparrows; and he enjoins his disciples, in the belief of this, not to fear the most cruel persecutors; but to fear God only: for, says he, "the very hairs of your heads are all numbered." And, indeed, wicked men, — so absolute and universal is the divine government, — are, according to the language of Scripture, which is the language of God's heart, in God's hand, as a rod, an axe, or a saw, and as much at his control. (Isa. x. 5, 15.) And, therefore, St. Paul, viewing things in this light, taught Christians, in his day, to consider all their persecutions as coming from the hand of their heavenly Father, and designed by him as kind, loving chastisements, for their

benefit; and on this hypothesis, encourages them not to faint, nor be discouraged, but rather to take all well, and improve all to their spiritual good. (Heb. x. xi. xii.) And in this light, all the people of God, from the very earliest ages, have been wont to view the injuries they received from wicked men as coming from the hand of God. So Job, when the Sabeans and Chaldeans had robbed him, views them only as instruments used by God to answer holy and wise ends. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." So when Eglon, king of Moab, came against Israel in the time of the judges, it was looked upon that God had strengthened him to do it, thereby to chastise them for their crimes. . So when Shimei, in a most malicious manner, cursed David, he saw the hand of God in it, and said, "The Lord hath bidden him." So when Hadad the Edomite, and Rezon the son of Eliadah, endeavored to disturb Solomon's peaceful reign, it was believed, by good people, that God stirred them up to do it, to chastise Solomon for his sins; as was also the case with Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that wicked pretender, who afterwards "made Israel to sin." And when Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, through the pride of his heart and the ill advice of his young men, returned a rough answer to his subjects, which issued in the loss of ten tribes, and was followed with a long series of calamities for many generations, it was said, that "the cause was of God, that the Lord might perform his word." And when Amaziah king of Judah, through the vanity of his mind, challenged Joash the king of Israel to battle, which issued in his own overthrow, it was viewed as coming from God. "For it came of God that he might deliver them into the hands of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom." And when Ahab was seduced by his false prophets to go up to Ramath Gilead to battle, to the loss of his life, the whole plan is represented as being laid in heaven. (1 Kings xxii.) And when that proud tyrant, the king of Babylon, the hammer of the whole earth, had destroyed Jerusalem, burnt down the holy temple, and laid all their country in ruins, pious people all saw the hand of God in it, and believed that, "at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah." But time would fail, to mention all the instances of this nature recorded in God's holy word. And surely it must be needless, when, as in our present war, we through all New England have in so public a manner joined universally to profess and act upon this very principle, that wicked men are in the hands of God, and can do nothing but by his permission, and are absolutely at his control; for which reason we have had public

fasts, and public thanksgivings, relative to the war, as though we firmly believed the universal extent of divine providence.

But if the providence of God extends to the lesser, it does much more to the greater concerns of the intellectual system, as our Savior reasons. (Matt. x. 29, 30, 31.) If it extends to the sinful actions of men in this fallen world, which are comparatively but of little consequence, much more to the original introduction of sin into the moral system, which was an affair, strictly speaking, of infinite consequence. If it extends to the sparrows, one of which was valued at but half a farthing, so that they could not any of them fall on the ground without God's all-seeing eye and all-ordering hand, much more to the fall of angels, and to the fall of man, beings of more value than many sparrows. If the very hairs of our heads are all numbered, much more is God concerned about the spiritual and eternal welfare of the whole intellectual system; so that we may have the greatest assurance that, ever since the creation, not one evil thing has come to pass, but under the eye of the Omniscient; determined, permitted, and overruled by infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude. Do you believe this, my friend? Indeed you must believe it with all your heart, for this is "the Scripture account of the matter." Besides, —

2. God is a being of absolute perfection; infinite in wisdom, perfect in rectitude, boundless in goodness, who has an infinite regard to his own honor and to the good of the system; as reason and revelation teach. And as, from the absolute perfection of the divine nature, it is impossible for God to lie, so, for the same reason, it is impossible he should counteract any of his perfections. Therefore the whole of his conduct towards the intellectual system is absolutely perfect, and is no more capable of emendation than God is of becoming holier and wiser than he now is; for he must necessarily choose the best plan from eternity, and necessarily abide by it to eternity. For, —

3. The Holy Scriptures give us the fullest assurance, that God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" "of one mind;" "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" and that "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." So that he never did, and never can, alter his original plan, or suffer himself to be disappointed. (Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11.)

He laid a scheme to bring the Israelites to the land of Canaan, and promised to do the thing; nor could all their wickedness in the wilderness provoke him to give up the design; yea, he was disposed to prosecute it just as much as if they had not sinned; as he informed Balaam, to the terror of Balak.

"God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent; he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." He had laid a scheme to continue the Jews his visible people until the coming of the Messiah and the setting up of the Christian church, nor could all their sins before the Babylonish captivity, nor all their perverseness afterwards, induce him to cast them off, and give up his design. No. "I am the Lord," says he. "I change not." I abide by my original plan. "Therefore, ye sons of Jacob," infinitely provoking as your conduct is, "are not consumed." He wrought for his great name's sake through the whole affair; and his infinite resolution to accomplish his glorious plan kept him immovable, and finally carried him through, in spite of all possible provocations from a most ungrateful, perverse people; even as he himself had declared, when, speaking of this very thing, he says, "the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

And as nothing could ever induce the unchangeable God to alter any of his plans himself,* so none of his creatures were ever able to disconcert them. Joseph's brethren attempted to do it in one instance, and Pharaoh struggled still much more to do it in another; but, in both cases, all they did was overruled to accomplish the divine designs to the best advantage. God had laid a scheme to bring the Jews, out of the Babylonish captivity, to their own land. The thing looked to them almost impossible. They walked in darkness, and saw no light. "Trust in the Lord, and stay yourselves on your God," said the Almighty, speaking of this very thing, for "my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." And if the Almighty would not suffer himself to be disappointed in his lesser schemes, which were of smaller importance, much less will he suffer himself to be frustrated in his grand universal plan, which is of infinitely greater concern, and in which his own honor, and the eternal welfare of the whole system, are infinitely interested.

Besides, if we do but really and firmly believe the absolute omniscience and all-sufficiency of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, we cannot but see the reason of the thing, and be

* God laid a scheme to bring the Ninevites to repentance. He sent Jonah to preach, and threaten destruction. The Ninevites are brought to repentance, exactly according to his design; so that he did not alter, but exactly accomplish his plan in that case. The same may be said of all other instances of the like kind recorded in Scripture; which, however, are sometimes, contrary to all reason, used to prove that the omniscient God may, on new views, alter his purposes; when, in fact, he would not be omniscient were he capable of so much as one new idea.

still further assured that he can neither alter any of his plans himself, nor possibly be disappointed by any of his creatures; for, from eternity, all possible plans lay open to his view; he had his choice, he chose the best; and what in all nature can induce him to alter his choice, and prefer one not so good? Upon after-consideration, we often have new thoughts, or view things in a different light, and so alter our schemes for the better; but God has not had one new idea since he has been in existence. From eternity he existed, and from eternity all things were perfectly in his view. It is therefore absolutely impossible he should ever see any reason to change his purposes; and equally impossible he should change them absolutely, without any reason at all. And his infinite wisdom and almighty power, whereby he is absolutely all-sufficient, and able with the greatest ease to do according to his pleasure, in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, renders it simply impossible that any of his creatures, by power or policy, should be able to disconcert any of his schemes. And this he knows; and this lays a solid foundation for his perfect tranquillity and complete self-enjoyment; and in the view of this he can be perfectly happy, and even without one uneasy thought, at the head of the universe, let the storms here below rise ever so high. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." And this renders him a fit object of trust, a secure refuge to his people, "though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." But this leads me to add,

4. Be firmly persuaded of the perfect and unchangeable happiness of the Holy One of Israel; or, in other words, believe with all your heart that he is, not only in name, but in deed and in truth, "over all, God blessed for ever."

I grant, he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; an infinitely holy and good being; infinitely engaged to advance his own honor and the good of his own world. I grant, that sin in its own nature is infinitely to his dishonor, and tends to the utter ruin of the whole universe. I grant also, that, to set forth God's infinite abhorrence of sin, and its contrariety to his perfect felicity, and natural tendency really to put him to pain and distress his heart, God is often said, in the language of Scripture, to be "grieved," to be "vexed," to be "wearied," to be "tried," to be "pressed as a cart full of sheaves;" and could sin finally disappoint God's glorious designs, and frustrate the original scheme he had in view in the creation of the universe, break up the plan on which his heart was so infinitely set;

could this be, I grant, that he would be not only less happy — as you inadvertently have intimated that in fact he now is, in saying, that he would have had "greater pleasure" if things had been otherwise — I say, not only less happy, but really miserable; and that to an infinite degree: even equal to his infinite regard to his own honor, and to the good of the universe. To see himself disappointed, finally and forever, in what was infinitely dear to him; and that in spite of the utmost exertion of his infinite wisdom and almighty power; and disappointed by his own creatures, the clay in his own hands, headed by the devil, his avowed enemy; were such an event possible, would make him feel himself not to be almighty and all-sufficient; not to be God; not to be King, supreme and independent; but to lie at the mercy of his creatures: yea, horrible as the expression is, to lie at the mercy of the devil, the grand enemy to God and to all good; which feeling must render the misery of such a being as God is, absolutely complete. For if the devil can break up God's schemes just as he pleases, God is absolutely at his mercy as to the accomplishment of any of them.

So certain, therefore, as we are, that he is, in fact, "over all, God blessed forever," just so certain may we be, that "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." And the whole universe shall know that he is the Lord, and the whole system be filled with his glory.

And the omniscient, almighty God, perfectly conscious of all this, enjoys himself, absolutely superior to so much as one uncomfortable idea; and without the least uneasiness, in perfect tranquillity, is possessed of an infinite degree of happiness. Or, to express all in one word, he is "over all, God blessed forever; of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

And what if we cannot see fully into the reasons of the divine conduct in the permission of sin, shall we think he has acted unwisely? Shall we think he does not mean to do what is best? Shall we give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature? Shall we ungod our Maker, rather than suspect our own judgment? Or shall we give up our belief of the perfect happiness of the infinitely glorious and blessed God, and believe him to be a very miserable being, rather than to think that he can be pleased with that very plan, which he has in fact chosen before all possible plans? Or, if he is perfectly pleased with his own plan, shall we fly in his face, charge him with being the author of sin, and represent the devil as the greatest saint,

and God as the greatest sinner? as you seem to have, dear sir, with dreadful boldness, ventured to do.* Wherefore,

* Were it natural to all mankind, heartily to acquiesce in all the dispensations of divine providence, as being perfectly wise, holy, just, and good, excepting only the permission of sin, it would not seem so likely, at first glance, that the fault was wholly in us in this case. It would be a strange case, and we might be more at a loss to account for it. But it is not at all uncommon or strange for mankind to dislike the divine conduct in other instances, as well as this. Thus, it is a common thing for the crosses and troubles of life to sit heavy on the spirits of mankind; and a general murmuring goes round the world; and thousands think that none meet with so much trouble as themselves; and that they have good reason to be discontented; yet if they have good reason to be discontented, they are not to blame; but the fault is in God, in whose hand the rod is, and from whom all our afflictions come. O how hard is it for many a one under great afflictions to bring their hearts sweetly to approve of the divine conduct, and love and bless the God that chastises them. O how difficult to get and maintain that frame of spirit, which holy Job expressed in these words, "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." But whence arises all this difficulty? Not from any fault in God, all whose ways are wise, holy, just, and good. It is really best, most for the honor of God and good of mankind, that this apostate race, who have rebelled against the great King of the universe, turned their backs upon the God that made them, and are idolizing the good things of this world, should be thus chastised, that they may know that it is an evil and bitter thing to despise the Lord, to forsake the fountain of all good; and be experimentally convinced that all cisterns are broken cisterns; and driven to an absolute necessity to confess their sin, humble themselves, forsake their idols, and return to the only true and living God. But, naturally, we do not love to have our hearts humbled, weaned from the world, and to have God for the alone portion of our souls; and as we do not like the ends, so we cannot be pleased with the means. Did we like the one, the other might appear full of wisdom and beauty. If all the dispensations of providence were calculated to render us rich, honorable, and happy, in the fulness of all earthly good things, no reproach, no sickness, no losses, no troubles of any kind, that this world might be our heaven and our home, this would suit such ungodly, proud, worldly hearts as ours naturally are; and we could love such a God, and think well of all his ways. But, alas! besides all our present troubles, we are soon to die, leave this world we are so fond of, and to go and appear before our Judge, and receive according to our deeds. This is still more shocking. O how glad would many be, if there was no such thing as death, and no such day as the day of judgment; but above all, nothing is so dreadful as the eternal torments of hell. This shocks thousands and millions, and tempts them to call in question all the divine perfections, especially, when all this is threatened in God's law, for the first transgression, for the least sin. (Gal. iii. 10.)

Now, if it is as difficult to bring our hearts to be reconciled to all this, as to God's permitting sin, although in all these particulars we must own God's conduct is wise, holy, just, and good, or give up the whole of divine revelation at once; have we not great reason to think that there is something amiss on our own hearts, some general cause which produces all these effects? And if we are indeed natively enemies to God in the temper of our minds, as the Scriptures teach, it is not strange that we should feel a general dislike to all his ways. If we are blind to his glory, and regardless of his honor, and unconcerned about the spiritual good of the system, the best good of God's holy and eternal kingdom, and attached only to our own particular, unholy, and merely carnal interests; it is not strange that we should dislike the divine conduct towards the intellectual system, as much as the Israelites in the wilderness did God's conduct towards them. (Rom. viii. 5—11.) For although, on the whole, greater glory may be brought to God, and greater spiritual good to the system, yet if our hearts naturally are not suited with God's ends, neither will they be with his means; and so his whole plan, instead of appearing perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty, may look

5. I pray you lay it down for a maxim, that sin is, in its own nature, just exactly the same abominable, odious thing, and not one whit the better because God permits it to be, and because he intended, and because he will overrule it to good. And believe it firmly, and act upon it steadily, that there is not the least imaginable reason to suspect the wisdom of the whole, or of any part of the divine conduct, because we cannot see what good ends he can have in view. The truth of both which observations has been at large illustrated already.

Is it not pride, my brother, unsufferable pride, in us, poor contemptible worms, to get up into the judgment-seat, call Almighty God to our bar, examine his conduct, and then boldly pronounce it bad, and publicly tell the world, that he has not done that "which is most for his own glory;" and all, because we cannot see the reasons of his conduct, although we know at the same time, that our views are so contracted, that we are no proper judges; and that it is impossible we should prove his present plan not to be the best? Yea, to be so engaged to slur our Maker's conduct, as to be vexed with a fellow-worm, who thinks it impossible God should act unwisely, and would therefore speak in behalf of the injured Majesty of heaven, and plead his cause, and endeavor to justify his ways to men; and with indignation to cry out, "you have no right to be so violently confident that the present scheme is most for God's glory and the good of the moral system;" — "I can offer reasons sufficient to balance yours, and make the contrary appear highly probable;" for I think I can prove, "that, in fact, God does not do what is most for his own glory;" and it is "a mere fallacy" to pretend that he "is obliged to do it!"

I pray you, sir, give up this impious, blasphemous, principle, that "God does not do what is most for his glory;" and if you think it condescension, pray condescend, at least so far as to believe that God knows better than you do, and is infinitely more concerned than you ever was to do as well as he knows how. You would think it an intolerable reflection, if all your acquaintance should join to give you this character, namely, that, in your daily conduct, and even in the most important affairs, you do not make conscience of acting according to your best judgment. O blush, be ashamed, and be confounded, and never open your mouth to justify the impious reflection

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as dark and gloomy to us, as did the divine dispensations to Israel of old. On the whole, I think we have infinitely more reason to believe that the fault is in us, than in God; and that it much better becomes us to suspect our own hearts, than to "doubt whether God does what is most for his own glory." See these sentiments more enlarged upon in my sermons.

you have, in the sight of all the country, cast upon the character of the Holy One of Israel; lest, if you allow yourself, Pharaoh-like, to oppose your Maker, you, in the end, meet the same dreadful fate.

Rather, let us seek divine grace, from the God of all grace, that our hearts may be prepared to approve and love the works and ways of God, that when they shall in the next world more fully open to our view, we may be ready to join the general assembly of heaven, and cry, "Amen, hallelujah!" O let us get a heart to love his law, and to love the gospel of his Son, and heartily approve the daily dispensations of his providence; all which, analogous to the whole of his universal plan, are calculated to exalt God and humble the creature. And if we can be but heartily reconciled to those parts of the divine government which are more near to our view, we shall be prepared heartily to approve of those parts which are more remote; yea, and of the whole, for it is all of a piece.

When a sinner is at first savingly converted, he sees but a very small part of God's universal plan of government; but what he sees, he heartily approves and loves, and so he begins to be habitually prepared to approve and love the whole. He grows up into this divine temper. At the day of judgment, this divine temper will be perfect; and so then he will be perfectly prepared to approve, admire, and with all his heart love and delight in God's universal plan, which then will be opened to the view of the intellectual system. But those who, when on earth, had not the least disposition to approve and love any part of God's moral government, rightly understood, but were enemies to God, to his law, and gospel, and common dispensations of his providence towards mankind in this world, will, when the whole of God's universal plan is opened to view, feel no approbation; but rather, their enmity against God, and all his ways, will break out and rage to perfection to eternal ages. Wherefore,

6. And lastly, instead of indulging a quarrelling, cavilling, disputatious temper, and spending our precious time in finding fault with God's ways, let us rather spend our leisure hours in reading God's holy word, and in fervent prayer for divine instruction.

It had been infinitely wiser for the Israelites in the wilderness to have spent their time in prayer to God, than in murmuring against him. Their corruptions made them so blind that they could not see; and then they laid all the blame upon God, for which God doomed them to wander and fall in the wilderness, and never reach the holy land. And they were our

ensamples; and these things were written for our instruction. O therefore, my brother, let us in this benighted world, how dark soever things appear, not cavil against any of the ways of God; but rather humbly cry to him for divine grace to enable us to believe, thoroughly to believe, that "supreme wisdom cannot err," and accordingly, "heartily to acquiesce in the dispensations of supreme wisdom, and humbly admire and adore where we cannot fully comprehend;" in a firm belief that all the affairs of the universe are by him conducted in such an infinitely perfect manner, as that when "full day shall be poured on all the ways and works of God," they will appear in such a light as to bring the greatest glory to God and good to the system, and so fill all holy beings with "unspeakable joy" and the most exalted thoughts of God, and even be a source of eternal instruction, and means of the swiftest progress in humility, holiness, and happiness, in the intellectual system, forever and ever; while all join in eternal praises to the infinitely wise God, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things: to whom be glory forever." AMEN.

THERON, PAULINUS, AND ASPASIO;

OR,

LETTERS AND DIALOGUES

UPON THE NATURE OF

LOVE TO GOD, FAITH IN CHRIST, ASSURANCE OF A TITLE TO ETERNAL LIFE:

CONTAINING

SOME REMARKS ON THE SENTIMENTS

OF

THE REV. MESSIEURS HERVEY AND MARSHAL,

ON THESE SUBJECTS.

"AMIDST ALL THE DARKNESS AND UNCERTAINTY WHICH EVIDENTLY RUN THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF THE BEST OF MEN, THIS IS OUR UNSPEAKABLE HAPPINESS, THAT 'WE HAVE A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY, TO WHICH WE DO WELL TO TAKE HEED.' AS FOR OFFENCE, THAT CANNOT BE GIVEN, AND OUGHT NOT TO BE TAKEN, WHEN ALL WE ADVANCE IS STRICTLY CONFORMABLE TO THE UNERRING RULE OF TRUTH. I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PERSONS OF MEN, BUT WITH THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL. OURANIUS, THOUGH EMINENTLY DEVOUT, MAY BE MISTAKEN." *Hervey.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

If Paulinus's sentiments, finally embraced by Theron, and exhibited in the following Letters and Dialogues, are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, there needs no apology for publishing them, at a time when the contrary errors so much prevail in the British dominions. And it is hoped candid readers will easily excuse the mentioning by name some authors in the contrary scheme, as they seem to be esteemed the best on that side of the question. If his sentiments are wrong, let some man of a clear head and a friendly heart, set him right, from the sacred oracles of truth; and it will be accepted, as well by him as by the public, with the utmost gratitude. For these are points in which our dearest, our spiritual and eternal interest is greatest concerned; and it is even of infinite importance, that we know the truth before it is too late.

"Should any thing be urged," says Mr. Hervey, in the preface to his Theron and Aspasio, "forcible enough to overthrow my arguments, or detect a mistake in my sentiments, the world may depend upon seeing a free and undissembled retraction. I shall look upon it as a duty which I owe to my conscience, to my readers, and to my God, publicly to acknowledge the error." And indeed, we who claim to be the ministers of Christ, are quite insensible to the honor of God, and to our own eternal interest, as well as the eternal interest of our fellow-creatures, if we are not conscientiously concerned to advance and maintain the truth, and nothing but the truth. Wherefore, to the above-recited declaration

of Mr. Hervey, the publisher of these Letters and Dialogues says Amen, with all his heart.

N. B. As Paulinus had some other books in view, besides the two chiefly referred to,* so Theron has sometimes introduced a text of Scripture, an argument, etc., not contained in either of these books, and for which these two authors are not answerable.

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* Most of the marginal references to Hervey's Dialogues, and Marshal on Sanctification, in the first edition of Bellamy, are omitted in this, as the edition of those works referred to by him are not now in use. All the important passages which Bellamy introduces from Hervey and Marshal with quotation marks, are indicated, in the present edition, by the letters *H* and *M*, denoting those authors respectively. — Eds.

LETTERS AND DIALOGUES.

LETTER I.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

NEW ENGLAND, *Dec.* 15, 1758.

DEAR ASPASIO:

NEWS from your Theron now in this remote corner of the earth, you will eagerly expect by every ship that sails from these parts. But what shall I write, O my friend! No pleasant walks, no beautiful gardens, no romantic mounts, my dear Aspasio, nor any other theme to entertain and to amuse, must you expect from me! Alas! I have been deceived! My hopes, once high raised, are, I think, entirely gone. As the "rush without mire, and the flag without water, so the hypocrite's hope shall perish."*

As I was walking in my garden, soon after our visit to Philenor,† (which was, as I remember, about the middle of harvest, A. D. 1754,) musing on all your agreeable conversation, your fervent zeal, and how you urged me to believe — To believe what? said I, to myself. To believe that Christ died for *me*. How for *me?* thought I. Aspasio knows, I believe that Christ died for sinners. Yes, but he would have me apply that to my own soul, and believe Christ died for me. Aspasio knows, I believe that Christ died; that whosoever, according to the true sense of the gospel, believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. Is this believing in him? Is this justifying, saving faith? To believe I am one that he died for; one for whom he intended to procure pardon, reconciliation with God, and eternal life? Yes, this, this is faith. "A real persuasion that the blessed Jesus has shed his

* The first edition of Mr. Hervey's Dialogues is referred to in this letter; as Theron is supposed, soon after the conversation at Philenor's, to have experienced what follows.

† Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, vol. iii. p. 262.

blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead, that through this great atonement and glorious obedience, he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, sanctifying grace, and all spiritual blessings." H. To believe it was for *me*, just as if I had been mentioned by name; even just as my tenant believed me, when, in his last sickness, I sent a message, assuring him I had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt. And just as David believed the kingdom of Israel should be his own, on the express promise of Almighty God. And just as I believed my lands to be my own, by the deeds of conveyance. In a word, Aspasio would have me go to God, and say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine;" not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but because I am conscious I am a sinner — all these blessings being consigned over to me as such, in the everlasting gospel; with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God. No clogging qualifications insisted on; only believe, and all is mine. I longed to know that Christ was mine.

"And could I see my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'd bid farewell to every tear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

But how can I see! how can I believe! O my unbelieving heart! what shall I do? "Cry to God for help," says my Aspasio. "Seek the blessed Spirit, to testify that God has given me eternal life; and this life is in his Son; and to witness with my spirit, that I am a child of God."

Thus, as I walked, I mused; my heart was full; I stopped, with eyes lift up to heaven, and said, "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief." I thought of Calvary. I heard the soundings of his bowels, and of his mercies towards me. "O thou of little faith! wherefore dost thou doubt?" Wherefore dost thou doubt of my love to thee, for whom I have shed my blood?

I believed; I was ravished; I was full of love, joy, and gratitude; and with eyes again lift up to heaven, I said, "Glory be to the Holy Ghost for testifying of Christ in my heart, and appropriating this great salvation to my soul." And thus I continued rejoicing for several days, and thought I should never doubt again.

But, O, alas! the scene soon changed. I gradually lost a sense of my great danger, and great deliverance, as the Israelites, who sang God's praise, but soon forgat his works; or like the stony-ground hearers, who heard the word with joy, endured for a while, and fell away. Or rather like the thorny ground;

for, as about this time I removed into New England, the cares of the world came in upon me, and choked the word, and I brought forth no fruit; rather, I lost all disposition to pray or praise, and my devotions degenerated into mere formality.

And now unbelief, as I then called it, began to work. "Surely all is mere delusion," thought I. But again I said, "This is my infirmity." And those words of Scripture were some comfort to me — "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? Who against hope believed in hope. Who walk in darkness and see no light, let them trust in the Lord, and stay themselves on their God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God." And I watched and prayed, and strove against my unbelieving thoughts.

From this time forward, having no clear marks or signs of grace for my comfort, nor any new manifestations of the love of God to my soul, I began, as you had directed in such a case, to live by faith. I used every day to go to God, and say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." And thus, unconscious of any sanctifying operations in my own breast, I lived wholly by faith; by faith, as I thought, on the promise and oath of the unchangeable Jehovah. And thus I continued many months, generally pretty easy; although sometimes troubled with doubts and fears.

But above a year ago, as I was reading my Bible, in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel I found the parable of the sower, which reached my case, and greatly gained the attention of my heart. Here I saw the various sorts of hearers, the different kinds of Christians described; and perceived that none are esteemed good men by our blessed Savior, but those who, like the good ground, bring forth fruit. This startled me; this gave my faith a shock I never could get over.

However, not knowing but that I mistook the meaning of that parable, I resolved to search the Scriptures, to see if it were really the character of all true believers to bring forth fruit; that is, as I understood it, to be holy in heart and life. I began with the Gospel of St. Matthew, and read the New Testament through, and made a collection of many texts of Scripture, which I wrote down and commented upon. I will give you a specimen from my diary.

"November 20, 1757. I retired as usual to read the Holy Scriptures, by which I am to be judged at the last day. I began to read Christ's sermon on the mount — 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are they that mourn; Blessed are the meek; the pure of heart,' etc. But, alas! O my soul! I am not conscious of these good qualifications: are there not, nevertheless,

blessings laid up for me? I read on to chap. vii., ver. 19, 27. 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' This, this, O my soul, reaches my very case; this is my character; and this my doom! The following verses condemn me too. I am the man that has built his house upon the sand." Thus far my diary.

But how discouraging soever all this appeared, yet still I maintained some secret thoughts, that I was only a backslider, and should see things clearer after a while. Besides, to give up my hopes, and look upon myself a poor, Christless sinner, after I had so long settled down in quiet, was like death to my spirits. It opened a most frightful prospect before me. If not converted now, most probably I never shall be. I had as good live on in pleasing delusion, as sink down into despair.

And besides, I remembered you had said, "This method of seeking peace and assurance," by signs of grace, "I fear, will embarrass the simple-minded, and cherish rather than suppress the fluctuations of doubt; for let the marks be what you please, they are all a feeble and precarious evidence." And I wished I could boldly say, as once I did, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine," however unconscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast. H. But our blessed Savior's words struck terror through my soul — "He that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, is like a foolish man, that built his house upon the sand."

About this time, I was, by a religious person well acquainted with my case, directed to Mr. Shepherd on the Parable of the Ten Virgins, Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections, Mr. Brainard's Life, and some other books of the same stamp; "which," said he, "are esteemed by pious people in New England as the best of books on experimental religion." I obtained the books, I read them; they condemned not only my present state, but all my notions of religion; and represented true religion to consist in something essentially different, of which I had never had the least experience; which, instead of affording comfort and hope to my dejected mind, did but confirm my former doubts and fears. What now to do, I could not tell. Here, three thousand miles from my dear Aspasio, I cannot see his face, nor have his aid. I must find out another spiritual guide. I heard of one Paulinus, a clergyman, a noted friend to vital piety, a tender, faithful guide to bewildered souls; but not in my Aspasio's scheme. My conscience said, "Go

see the man, and act an honest part; tell him all your case; be willing to know the truth." My heart replied, "I cannot go." But as a serious, solemn sense of the eternal world was now daily growing in my heart, I was soon brought to a better mind; particularly in the evening of December 8, 1758. As I was alone for secret prayer, I had such a sense of eternity, a boundless eternity, and such a view of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation; the amazement and horror of self-deceived hypocrites, opening their eyes in eternal woe, who once refused to see, while there was hope, but now must see when all hope is forever gone; that I shuddered, and was ready even to cry out with anguish at the terrifying thought of this being at last my dreadful lot. Whereupon, resolving to be honest at all adventures, I determined on a visit the next Monday evening. I went; I went again and again; and knowing my dear Aspasio would be glad to hear what passed, I wrote down the substance from time to time, which I now send enclosed, in the form of *Three Dialogues;* which, when you have read, I am sure you will pity my case. And, O my Aspasio, cease not to pray for

Your disconsolate

THERON.

P. S. I expect no opportunity to write you again till early next spring; when you may look to hear further from your Theron, if on this side eternal burnings. God only knows how that will be. Adieu, my dear Aspasio.

DIALOGUE I.

On Monday evening, (December 11,) I had the happiness to find Paulinus at home, alone in his study. He received me with all the politeness of a gentleman, and with all the undissembled goodness of a Christian. After inquiring into the state of religion in Great Britain, when I came from thence, perceiving, by what was said, my acquaintance with Aspasio, he made some inquiries after him, and his sentiments of religion, and about a book he has lately so strongly recommended;* which

* Mr. Marshal's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification; "which I shall not," says Mr. Hervey, "recommend in the style of a critic, or like a reader of taste, but with all the simplicity of the weakest Christian; I mean from my own experience. It has been made one of the most useful books to my own soul; I scarce ever fail to receive spiritual consolation and strength from the perusal of it. And was I to be banished into some desolate island, possessed only of two books besides my Bible, this should be one of the two, and perhaps the first that I would choose."

gave me an opportunity, without letting him into the state of my soul, — a thing I was loath to do, — to bring upon the board topics I designed. Wherefore I began.

Theron. Sir, may I know your sentiments relative to some points in these books?

Paulinus. I am willing you should know my sentiments on any of the doctrines of religion; but should choose to say nothing of the sentiments of any particular author by name.

Ther. I am sensible this is not so desirable, nor should I ask it, but that I am not a little embarrassed between the scheme of religion, advanced in President Edwards's Treatise on Religious Affections, and this advanced in these books. And I want to know what may be said in answer to the particular arguments of these divines. And I shall consider all you say, how plain soever; for I desire to use the greatest freedom, not in a personal light, as designed to reflect at all on these authors, but only as designed to give instruction to me. And if you could particularly answer several things I find in them, it would give me much more satisfaction, than to hear your opinion in general. Besides, you know what authors publish to the world they voluntarily submit to the examination of all. And if the good of mankind, which all authors profess to seek, calls for a particular examination of any of their writings, they cannot consistently be displeased, if they are used with candor. These authors themselves have taken the greatest freedom to speak of the sentiments of divines, ancient and modern. And I know my dear Aspasio would be perfectly pleased to hear you, with the utmost freedom, make all your remarks and observations on his piece; for he is one of the most candid, generous, good-natured gentlemen I ever saw. Pray, sir, therefore, make no excuses, nor be at all upon the reserve.

Paul. What particular points, sir, do you refer to?

Ther. The nature of love to God, of justifying faith, and of assurance. To begin with love to God: I desire to know what is the primary and chief motive, which ought to induce me to love God; a view of the ineffable glories of the Deity, as he has manifested himself in his word and in his works; or a belief of his love to me in particular.

Paul. Before we inquire into the original grounds of love to God, pray tell me, what in God are we to love; and how are we to love him.

Ther. "The Lord is not at all loved with that love that is due to him as Lord of all, if he be not loved with all our heart, and spirit, and might. And we are to love every thing in him; his justice, holiness, sovereign authority, all-seeing eye, and all his decrees, commands, judgments, and all his doings." M.

Paul. Who are under obligations thus to love God? Saints, or sinners? Christians, or heathens? Some, or all of mankind?

Ther. All mankind. Even the heathen, who are without any written law or supernatural revelation, are obliged, by the light of nature, to love God with all their hearts, and that under the penalty of God's everlasting wrath.

Paul. If all mankind, even the heathen world not excepted, are thus under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts, and to "glorify God as God," to use the apostle's expressions, it must needs be that there is a ground and reason of love to God, antecedent to a consideration of his being our reconciled Father and Friend in Jesus Christ; for the heathen, millions of them, never heard of Jesus Christ. And there are great multitudes in the Christian world who live and die without an interest in God's fatherly love in Christ; and yet you say, all these are under such obligations to love God with all their hearts, that they will deserve his eternal wrath for the least neglect. And, indeed, the Holy Scriptures most expressly assert the same thing. (Rom. i. 18—21. Gal. iii. 10.)

Ther. But, sir, is it not impossible * we should love God before we see that he is our reconciled Father and Friend in Jesus Christ? We must know that our sins are forgiven, and be well persuaded that God is reconciled to us, before we can love him.

Paul. God never manifests himself, as a reconciled God and Father, to any of the children of men, until they are first reconciled to him, and love him. (John xiv. 21. Acts iii. 19.) Their first love to God, therefore, must of necessity begin on some other foundation, from some other inducement; or they never can begin to love him at all.

Ther. But what is there in God that can induce us to love him, unless we first know that he loves us? I appeal to the experience of all the true saints, as inconsistent with your supposition.

Paul. This is the language of God's law — "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Pray, what reasons and grounds are there for this law? Answer my question first, and

* Should a lying fellow bring tidings to an impenitent prisoner, justly condemned to die for murder, assuring him of a pardon from his judge, the deluded murderer might be full of love to his judge, and greatly extol his justice, as well as goodness, and pour out floods of tears; but on discerning his mistake, he would soon return to his former temper. God's nature and law are just the same before he forgives us as after, and as worthy to be loved; but it is easier for an impenitent sinner to commend God's law, in a firm belief he is delivered from the curse, than to love it as being in its own nature holy, just, and good. Satan knows it is no evidence of uprightness in God's account, that a man is very religious, if all his religion arises merely from selfish considerations. (Job i. 8—11.)

then I will answer yours. Tell me the grounds and reasons of this law, and I will tell you what there is to induce us to love God before we know that he loves us.

Ther. The law teaches us, first, to believe that God is our God, our reconciled Father and Friend. "Thou shalt love the Lord *thy God.*"

Paul. God is our God, the God of the whole human race, as he is our Creator, our Preserver, our rightful Lord and Sovereign, who has an entire and absolute authority over us; but he is not a reconciled Father and Friend to all the human race. Rather, "the whole world lieth in wickedness," and the greatest part of mankind are under the divine wrath. (John iii. 36.) And God is "angry with them every day; his soul hates them, and he is whetting his sword for their destruction, if they repent not." And yet, even while in such a state, you grant they are under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts, and that the least defect exposes them to eternal damnation; nor have you granted any more than St. Paul expressly asserts, (Gal. iii. 10.) Now, pray tell me, is this a reasonable law?

Ther. I grant this law is holy, just, and good.

Paul. But then it will follow, that there are reasons and grounds why God should be thus loved, antecedent to a consideration of his being our reconciled Father and Friend; reasons and grounds which are sufficient, which really oblige us in point of duty, and therefore ought to influence us in practice. And if we are not influenced by them, we are to blame; yea, so much to blame, you say, as to deserve God's eternal wrath.

Ther. It is certain that all the perfection, goodness, and excellency of the divine nature cannot render God an amiable object to us, unless we know that he loves us, and is our reconciled Father and Friend.

Paul. The first question is not whether unregenerate sinners, while dead in sin and enemies to God, do actually love God, but whether they ought not to love him, — whether the perfection, goodness, and excellency of the divine nature is not a proper inducement which renders it reasonable and fit; yea, which obliges; nay, infinitely obliges them to love God. I think you must grant this; for how else can the law be holy, just, and good?

Ther. If I should grant that the perfection, goodness, and excellency of the divine nature does render it fit and reasonable that we should love God with all our hearts, yet it is impossible we should love him, except first we know he loves us.

Paul. If God is really a being infinitely amiable in himself, and if it is fit and reasonable we should love him for the perfec-

tion, goodness, and excellency of his nature, then there is, yea, there can be no difficulty in the way of the practice of this duty, but what lies in the badness of our hearts, and so, what we are to blame for. And therefore, were our hearts right, we should love him for his own loveliness,* and feel disposed to glorify God *as God;* as the very heathen ought to do, who never heard of his designs of mercy by Jesus Christ. Nay, all the heathen world are at this day, and ever have been, entirely without excuse in not being thus affected towards the infinitely glorious God that made them. Yea, they are for this infinitely to blame, so as to deserve eternal wrath. And this is St. Paul's doctrine. (Rom. i. 18, 21.) Nay, this doctrine is fundamental to St. Paul's whole scheme of religion. Overthrow this, and you will overthrow his whole scheme, for it is in this view that he pronounces Jew and Gentile, even the whole world, to stand guilty before God, with their mouths stopped, without one excuse to make for themselves, though doomed to eternal destruction for not loving God with all their hearts. And so holy, just, and good, does he esteem this law to be, as that it was needful the Son of God should be set forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that "He might be just," and not go counter to all good rules of government in pardoning and saving true penitents.

Ther. The heathen were liable to destruction for their idolatries and gross immoralities.

Paul. Yes; and also for their not glorifying God as God. "The wrath of God," says the apostle, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness"—against the least degree of disrespect towards the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven. The least defect of love towards God exposes them to eternal destruction. This was the apostle's constant doctrine, and a chief foundation of his whole scheme of principles. (Gal. iii. 10. Rom. i. 18; iii. 20.)

Ther. But the Gentiles had not so much as heard of the way of salvation by Christ, and must therefore, if their consciences were awakened, be in fearful expectation of eternal wrath. But surely it must be absolutely impossible we should

* If our hearts were right, that is, were as they ought to be, were as the law requires them to be, we should love God for his own loveliness. But in regeneration our hearts begin to be right; therefore, then, even at that instant, we begin to love God for his own loveliness. For at that very instant when "the vail is taken from our hearts, we all, with open face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." Even the law, as a "ministration of death and condemnation, appears glorious." But every man is to blame that his heart is not right. Theron pleads impossibility. St. Paul, however, declares this kind of impossibility to be no excuse. (Rom. i. 20, 21.)

love God, if we view him as disposed to punish us in hell forever. Yea, "if I look on God as contrary to me, as one that hates me and will damn me, my own innate self-love will breed hatred and heart-risings against him in spite of my heart." M.

Paul. That is, the divine law is so intolerably cruel, that, unless it is entirely set aside as to us, we can never be pacified towards our Maker. We are in arms, in open rebellion so virulent that we are full of "hatred and heart-risings," in spite of all restraints. And we proclaim, in the sight of Heaven, our cause is so just, that we can never lay down our arms, fall at the foot of our sovereign, and justify his law; nay, we can never have one good thought of him, till first he set aside his law, remove the curse, and grant us heaven upon our demands. Upon this condition, we will forgive our lawgiver for what is past, and be at peace for the future. On this footing, we will lay down our arms and be reconciled. Our first work, therefore, is to believe that God doth give Christ and his salvation to us, and is become our reconciled Father and Friend. And this belief is to lay the foundation of all our religion. But O, my dear Theron, such a faith, growing up out of such an unhumbled, unsubdued heart as this, and a religion arising from such a root, is all delusion, if there be any such thing in nature as delusion.*

Besides, tell me, my Theron, do you verily believe, that God's disposition to punish sin, according to his holy law, is a hateful disposition? And do you verily believe, that God is an odious being on this account? Or do you allow yourself to hate God, for that for which he appears infinitely amiable in the eyes of all the heavenly world? (Rev. xix. 1, 6.) Or, is your heart a carnal, unregenerate heart, under the full power of enmity against God and his law? (Rom. viii. 7.) It is certain, what you say can never be justified. For if we have given God just cause to hate and punish us, by our wickedness, he is not the less lovely for being disposed to do so, except he is the less lovely for being holy and just; that is, the less lovely for that in which his loveliness in a great measure consists.

You acknowledge the law is holy, just, and good, even as to the heathen world, who never heard of a Savior. Therefore, it is not the grace of the gospel that makes the law good. The law is older than the gospel, and was holy, just, and good,

* How righteous is it in the holy Sovereign of the world, to suffer such a proud, self-righteous sinner, so ready to quarrel for a pardon, to be deluded with a false persuasion that he is pardoned! As he takes Satan's side against God and his law, so God may justly leave him in Satan's power. (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.)

before the gospel had a being. Yea, the law had been forever good, if Christ had never died. We were not the injured, abused party; Christ did not die to make satisfaction to us, pacify our angry minds, and allay our "hatred and heart-risings." The grace of the gospel is not granted to counterbalance the rigor of the law, and to render God's plan of government justifiable; and so to sweeten the embittered minds of God's enemies. God the Father was not a tyrant, nor did his Son die a sacrifice to tyranny, to rescue his injured subjects from the severities of a cruel law. Nay, if the law in all its rigor had not been holy, just, and good, antecedent to the gift of Christ, there had been no need God should ever give his Son to die, to answer its demands. It ought to have been repealed on Adam's fall, if too severe for an apostate race; and not honored by the obedience and death of God's own Son. If this law, as binding on a fallen world, is not in itself holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, the gospel of Christ is all delusion. For it is impossible the Son of God should die to answer the demands of an unrighteous law. It was wrong he should bear a curse in our stead, which we ourselves did not deserve. Such an appointment would have been inconsistent with all the divine perfections. If we view the law as too severe, we must view the gospel as not of God, if we will be consistent with ourselves.*

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* In Mr. Hervey's ninth Dialogue, vol. ii. p. 16, edit. 1st, Aspasio having cited the words of the apostle to prove his point, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse," (Gal. iii. 10,) Theron objects, and Aspasio answers as follows:—

"*Theron.* Under the curse! because our attempts to obey, though faithfully exerted, are attended with defects! Is not this unreasonable and shocking? Unreasonable, that the God of justice should establish a law of such consummate perfection, as no child of Adam can, even with his utmost assiduity and care, fulfil! Shocking, that the God of mercy should thunder out so severe a denunciation, on the least inadvertent breach, on every unavoidable failure! This exceeds the relentless rigor of Draco, or the tyrannical impositions of the Egyptian taskmasters. Draco is said to have written his laws in blood; yet he never enacted such institutions as were absolutely too strict and difficult to be observed. And though the Egyptian taskmasters insisted upon the full tale of bricks, without allowing the necessary proportion of straw, yet the punishment they inflicted was incomparably less than everlasting destruction."

"*Aspasio.* Had God Almighty's design in delivering his law to fallen mankind been to propound the means of their justification, your argument would have been valid, and your inference undeniable. But the supreme legislator had a very different, a far more mysterious end." That is, he designed the law to be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ; as Aspasio goes on to show, (p. 18, 19, 20,) without once thinking, that if the law, antecedent to a consideration of the interposition and death of Christ, was a cruel law, like that which the Egyptian taskmasters urged, it ought to have been repealed. It was a dishonor to God to make it, and a greater dishonor still to appoint his Son to answer its demands. Nor is a cruel law fit to be a schoolmaster in God's world, or suited to teach us any thing, but to have hard thoughts of God. And yet Aspasio goes on to say, (p. 21,) "Rather than the divine law should lose its honors, Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ashes; the ancient world was destroyed with a deluge; the

Therefore, you and I must approve the law as holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, with application to ourselves, before we can, with all our hearts, believe the Gospel to be true. And therefore, not a belief of God's love to us, but a view of the infinite loveliness of the divine nature, must reconcile us to the divine law. Nor does this reasoning attempt to prove an impossibility; but rather it demonstrates the absolute necessity of regeneration, as antecedent to the first act of faith; a doctrine your author does not believe; and yet a doctrine plainly taught in Scripture. (John i. 12, 13.)

Ther. Whatever we may do in speculations, when at ease, it is impossible, under a lively sense of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, that we should, with application to ourselves, approve in our very hearts the law in all its rigor, as holy, just, and good, as being really amiable and glorious in itself, till we know we are delivered from its curse.

Paul. If the law, in all its rigor, is not holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, before we are delivered from its curse, it is a pity the beloved Son of God was obliged to die to answer its demands. It is a pity that a bad, a hateful law, should be so infinitely honored in the sight of the whole intelligent system. It is a pity God ever made it; a greater pity he suffered it to stand unrepealed; but the greatest pity of all, that he gave his Son, his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, worshipped by all the hosts above, to die upon the shameful, painful cross, to answer its demands. The gospel opens a sad and gloomy scene to all the inhabitants of heaven, if the law is not a glorious law. You may, O my Theron, be ravished to think Christ died for you, let the law be good or bad; but you can never acquiesce in the gospel way of life by the blood of Christ, as honorable to God, till the law first appears glorious in your eyes; but rather, (forgive me, my friend,) I say, you will rather feel the heart of an infidel in your breast. You may be ravished to think Christ died for you; although you conceived of God the Father, as acting the part, (Heaven forbid the blasphemy!) I say, as acting the part of a tyrant in the whole affair. But then, who can be so stupid as to believe the Son

present frame of nature destined to the flames, and all its unholy inhabitants must be doomed to hell. Nay, rather than that the least tittle should pass unaccomplished, its curse has been executed on God's own Son, and all its injunctions have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ." Very true; but does not all this demonstrate that the law was not too severe and strict, but perfectly holy, just, and good? A glorious law. (2 Cor. iii. 7.) And that previous to the consideration of the grace of the gospel. Had the law been in itself bad, the death of Christ could not have made it good. Therefore, it was not "God's design" that the law should be our schoolmaster, that made the law good; but it was in itself holy, just, and good; and therefore, it was fit to be our schoolmaster.

of God died a sacrifice to tyranny? "If you are safe, you care not how." Is this your heart? If so, you are quite an infidel. Indeed, this is the heart of every natural man; and it is equally true, that every natural man is under the reigning power of infidelity. "No man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." (See also Rom. x. 9. 1 John iv. 15.)*

Wherefore, the awakened sinner, under a lively sense of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, with particular application to himself, must, through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, be brought to approve the law, in all its rigor, as holy, just, and good, as being really amiable and glorious in itself, before he can so much as believe, in Scripture sense, the gospel to be true. Till this, every man has the heart of an infidel; yea, till this, every man is as much of an enemy to the gospel, rightly understood, as to the law.

Here, my dear Theron, here lies the great difficulty of embracing Christianity. This sets the world against it. Their

* The external evidences of Christianity may induce men to such a belief of the gospel, as that they dare not renounce it, though they do not like it; but will not give a heart-satisfying conviction of its truth, so long as it seems to contain a system of doctrines inconsistent with the moral perfections of God. But at first sight, it appears inconsistent with the moral perfections of God, to give his Son to die in our stead, to answer the demands of a law in its own nature too severe. So long, therefore, as the law appears in this light, no man can heartily believe the report of the gospel. (Gal. iii. 10. 13.) And this is one reason that all unregenerate men, who in Scripture are considered as enemies to God's law, (Rom. viii. 7. 9,) are represented as not believing the gospel. (1 John v. 1, etc.) And this shows, how our unbelief of the gospel arises from our enmity against God and his law, (John vii. 17. and viii. 47,) and so is truly criminal. (John iii. 18—21.) And this accounts for the fearful apprehensions of eternal destruction so common to awakened sinners, who begin to see their state by law, but as yet do not approve the law as holy, just, and good. It is not strange their fears run so high, when they do not believe the gospel to be true. And this accounts for the aptness of awakened sinners to catch hold of false hopes, and build on false foundations; as they are blind to the only true way of escape by Jesus Christ. And this shows how preposterous it is to think to persuade sinners to come to Christ and trust in him, before first they approve the law by which they stand condemned. They may be deluded by false suggestions and false joys, but they will never believe the gospel to be true with all their hearts, till first they approve the law. Regeneration must be before faith. (John i. 12, 13.) As to the unthinking multitude, who believe any thing, they know not why, they may believe the gospel just as the Mahometans believe their Alcoran, merely because their fathers believed it before them. But no thinking, considerate man, who has a right doctrinal understanding of the gospel plan, can ever believe it with all his heart, or cordially acquiesce in this way of life, till, by seeing the glory of the God of glory, he approves the law as holy, just, and good, and so is prepared to see the wisdom of God in the death of his Son. See Mr. Edwards on the Affections, p. 182, 199, on the Nature of Faith. See also, Mr. Edwards on the Freedom of the Will; in which all the objections of the Arminians against the divine law, as requiring more of us than we can do, are sapped at the foundation. See p. 159, 177. See also the author's True Religion Delineated, wherein his sentiments relative to the nature of law and gospel may be seen more at large, and objections answered. As also in his Sermon on Gal. iii. 24.

hearts hate it, and their wits and pens are in a manner constantly employed to banish it from the face of the earth. All the chief errors in Christendom grow up from a secret hatred of God's holy law. But all their elaborate volumes are confuted with this single sentence: Christ loved the law in all its rigor, and felt it was holy, just, and good, or he would never have left his Father's bosom to die upon the cross, to answer its demands. Antinomians, Neonomians, Arminians, etc., must all give up their various schemes, or, if they will be consistent with themselves, go off into open infidelity. For the law in all its rigor is right, and glorious too, or the Son of God had never died to answer its demands.*

Ther. But, sir, is not what some say agreeable to Scripture, reason, and experience, namely: that as our enmity against God arises from conceiving him to be our enemy, so we can never be reconciled to him, till we first see and are persuaded that he loves us.

Paul. With your leave, sir, I will venture to affirm that this scheme is contrary to Scripture, reason, and the universal ex-

* If infidels triumph to see professed Christians advance such absurd and inconsistent schemes, they may do well to remember, that the very spirit of enmity to God and his law, which produces these sad effects among professed Christians, hath led them still farther, even to give up divine revelation itself.

Perhaps, first, the Arminian spirit wrought in their hearts, and they were, in their own fancy, infallibly certain, that it is not just that God should require more of his creatures than they can do, and then damn them for not doing. The next step, they denied the atonement of Christ, and commenced Socinians; for it appeared absolutely incredible, that the Son of God should die to answer the demands of an unjust law. But, lastly, when, on further consideration, they find that the Old and New Testaments both join to teach, that cursed is every man that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, (Deut. xxvii. 26. Gal. iii. 10,) and find that it is asserted, that Christ was made a curse for us, to redeem us from this very curse, (ver. 13,) even from the wrath to come, (1 Thes. i. 10,) and perceive, that the doctrine of atonement is so universally inwrought into the whole of divine revelation, that it cannot possibly be severed from it; and yet consider, that if Christ died to answer the demands of the law, the law must be supposed to be holy, just, and good, in all its rigor; a point they never can believe. Therefore, to extricate themselves out of all difficulties at once, (bold, daring rebels to God that they be!) notwithstanding all the infallible evidences God has given to its truth, they run the dreadful venture to give up the Bible itself. They had rather turn professed infidels, than own the divine law to be holy, just, and good. And then, so inconsistent are they, they pretend to make the law of nature their only rule; not considering that their enmity to the law of nature, the true and real law of nature, hath driven them to this dreadful length.

"The fool saith in his heart, There is no God." Did mankind really believe that there is a God of infinite glory, they could not but be convinced that they are really under infinite obligations to love him as such with all their hearts; and that the least defect deserves his everlasting wrath. But a fallen world are dead to God, blind to his beauty, and enemies to his law; as all their reasonings and all their conduct join to prove. So that atheism is the root of all errors; and enmity to God and his law shuts our eyes against the truth, and gives infidelity a reigning power over our hearts.

perience of all true saints. As to the experience of all true saints, we have that in the plainest language described by an inspired writer. "We *all*, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." A sight of the glory of God is what moves us to love him. Love to God is that image of God we are changed into. The image of God chiefly consists in love, as all own. And this is produced by a sense of God's glory, as the inspired apostle affirms. Besides, this scheme is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, which every where teaches, that those who are enemies to God are actually in a state of condemnation, (John iii. 18,) and of wrath, (ver. 36,) and never can nor will be received into the divine favor till they repent and are converted, (Acts iii. 19,) till they turn to God, (Prov. i. 23, 24. Ezek. xxxiii. 11,) and are reconciled to him through Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. v. 20. Luke xiii. 3, 5.) And, indeed, a true justifying faith comprises all this in its very nature, in its very first act. Besides, if one should be so deluded as to believe God was reconciled to him while impenitent and out of Christ, this belief would not, could not, bring him to love God. It is true, such a one might, like the carnal Israelites at the side of the Red Sea, be full of joy and love, arising merely from self-love; a kind of love which has in it nothing of the nature of true love to God, but is consistent with a reigning enmity against him.

Ther. But if our enmity against God arises from conceiving him to be our enemy, remove the cause, and the effect will cease. If we view him as our reconciled Father and Friend, the occasion of our enmity being removed, our enmity will cease, and we shall naturally love him.

Paul. Right, Theron; you say true, if that be the only cause of our enmity, this will effectually remove it. Nor shall we need to be born again, (John iii. 3,) or to have any new principle of divine life communicated to us. (John iii. 6. Eph. ii. 5.) But from the principles of nature we may love God thus, (Matt. v. 46,) and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit will be wholly needless. The vail need not be taken from our hearts, that we may behold the glory of God. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Only let God declare that he loves us, and all is done. And if he was our enemy before we turned enemies to him, it seems proper and meet he should declare himself to be reconciled first. Be sure, as this will put an end to the whole controversy between him and us, and set all things right. And one would think, that the God of peace would not be backward to make such a declaration, in the most explicit manner, to all the human race, and that without the interposition of a medi-

ator, if indeed he became an enemy to the human kind before we turned enemies to him. But if the human kind, without the least provocation, turned enemies first, and without any reason revolted from their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and, when God infinitely deserved their highest love, joined in open rebellion with Satan, God's avowed foe; and if this, our infinitely unreasonable enmity, is now the result of the very temper of our whole heart, even of a fixed contrariety of nature to God, his law and government, which yet are faultless,—yea, perfectly holy, just, and good, (Rom. vii. 12, and viii. 7,) it is infinitely unreasonable that God should forgive us till we acknowledge this is the case, and approve his law, by which we stand condemned, in the very bottom of our hearts. (Luke xviii. 13.) Nor, till we do this, can we possibly look to God, through Jesus Christ, for pardon, as absolutely of mere free grace, without which the righteous Monarch of the universe has declared we never shall be forgiven. (Rom. iii. 24. Mark xvi. 16.) But how contrary to reason is it to suppose that God became enemy to the human kind first, and that all our enmity arises from conceiving him to be our enemy, as though some fault were originally on God's side, before we revolted from him; and so, if he would now but become our friend, and love us, we should love him without any more ado. What need, then, of the death of his Son? Or what need of the sanctifying influences of his Spirit? If he was our enemy first, he may well, without a mediator, declare himself reconciled. And this will put an end to the whole controversy. A shocking scheme of religion this! But, shocking as it is, and as reluctant as you may be to own it in this shocking dress, yet you must, my Theron, adhere to it if you would be consistent with yourself, or else give up your darling point. For if we are enemies to God in the temper of our minds, previous to one thought of his being our enemy, a persuasion of his love, it is self-evident, will never reconcile us to him.

Ther. Understand me right. If we were to love God primarily and chiefly for his own excellences, a mere persuasion of his love to us, I own, would not be sufficient to bring us to this. But you are sensible, sir, that many look on this notion of loving God for himself, as a mere chimera. What makes God appear lovely to us is a belief, an assured persuasion, that our sins are blotted out, and that God is our reconciled Father and Friend, and altogether lovely to us.

Paul. But what warrant has a Christless sinner, while an enemy to God, to believe that his sins are blotted out? or, if he does believe so, and is ravished with his delusion, how can you

prove this ravishment is of the nature of true holiness? The devil can thus delude and ravish a poor sinner. But has Satan power to beget divine grace and real holiness in the heart?

Ther. But if the word of God is full on my side, this must determine the point.

Paul. Amen! I join issue here, with all my heart; nor shall any other writings ever determine for me any of the doctrines of religion.

Ther. It is expressly written, as the experience of all the saints in the apostolic age, in John iv. 16, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." And it follows, in ver. 19, "We love him because he first loved us." In these two verses our whole scheme is expressed in the plainest manner.

Paul. Yes; and it is as expressly written, in James ii. 21, "Was not our father Abraham justified by works?" And it is added, with respect to all good men, (ver. 24,) "Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." And in these two verses our whole scheme, say the Arminians, is expressed in the plainest manner.

Ther. We are not to be carried away, by the mere sound of words in a single text of Scripture or two, to notions contrary to the whole tenor of the sacred volume. This is the way of heretics, who thus "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction." We are rather, by viewing the context and comparing Scripture with Scripture, to search for the true meaning of the inspired writer. My dear Aspasio has set those words of St. James in their proper light, and proved that they are not at all to the purpose of the Arminians. And, indeed, I wonder how men that ever saw their own righteousness to be as filthy rags, should ever think of perverting the apostle's words to a meaning, it is plain, he never intended.

Paul. You speak well, my dear Theron, and I wonder how men who are daily "with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord," should ever think of putting such a sense on those words of St. John—a sense, it is plain, he never intended, neither came it into his heart. Indeed, I hope some men's hearts are more orthodox than their heads. However, let that be as it will; for it does not belong to you nor me to judge the state of men's souls: God only knows their hearts. With God we leave them. Yet their notions of religion we may examine, compare with Scripture, and pass judgment upon. Here we have a good right to judge. Wherefore let us, observing the rules of interpreting Scripture which you have hinted,—rules which all parties must allow to

be good, — let us, I say, impartially examine those words of the apostle, in 1 John iv. 16, 19, which you just now referred to as clearly expressing your whole scheme. Here, my dear Theron, here is the Bible: take it, and read the epistle through; and when you have done, tell me, who are they, what is the character of the men who use this confident language — "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Were they saints or sinners? Did they know they were the children of God, or were they doubtful? Did they know they were in a good estate by being conscious of sanctifying operations in their own breasts?

Ther. I have read the epistle. I grant they knew they were the children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. They did not merely hope this was the case, but they were certain of it. They *knew* it: (chap. iii. 1, 2.) And they knew it by such evidences as these, because they knew God, loved him, and kept his commands, (chap. ii. 3, 4, 5,) imitated the example of Christ, (ver. 6,) loved the brethren, (ver. 10,) as bearing the image of God, (chap. v. 1,) had overcome the prince of darkness, (chap. ii. 13,) were weaned from the world, (ver. 15,) had such divine illuminations as enabled them to understand, and confirmed them in the belief of, the great doctrines of religion, so that it was impossible they should be seduced, (ver. 19, 27,) purified themselves after the pattern of Christ, (chap. iii. 3,) lived in no sin, (ver. 6,) yea, could not live in sin, (ver. 9,) made sanctification their criterion of a good estate, (ver. 10,) looked upon all that were without it as children of the devil, (ver. 10;) they were governed by divine grace in their conduct towards their brethren, (ver. 18,19,) and made it their business to do the things which were pleasing in the sight of God, (ver. 22.) In a word, they were conscious to the sanctifying operations of God's spirit, which dwelt in them, (ver. 24, etc.)

Paul. Now tell me, O my Theron, might not these men, on good grounds, and with a safe warrant, say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us"? They knew they were the children of God, and entitled to eternal glory. They knew they were of the number of the elect, the sheep for whom Christ died, with an absolute design to save. They knew all this, not by believing it without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason; but they knew all this by evidences which pass for infallible in the court of heaven: evidences which they knew, and we know, the Judge will pronounce to be good and valid at the great day. Now tell me, O my Theron, if these men knew that God loved them, how can that prove that Christless, impenitent sinners, enemies to God, unreconciled,

can know it too? These men had good evidence for what they believed; but Christless sinners have no evidence that God loves them, or designs to save them, "from Scripture, sense, or reason," as the celebrated Mr. Marshal is obliged to own.

Ther. But the apostle says, we love him because he first loved us; which plainly supposes, they knew God loved them before they loved him.

Paul. If the apostle, and all those apostolic saints, should join to declare they never understood the matter so, this would quite satisfy you. But, which is altogether equivalent, they all agreed to make this their steady maxim, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." But antecedent to the first act of grace, they had only committed sin. Every act was a sinful act, before the first gracious and holy act. And therefore, according to their own rule, they were not the children of God, but the children of the devil; till they had performed, at least, one act of grace. And until they knew they had performed an act of grace, according to their own rule, they could not know their state was changed for the better. But in the first act of saving grace, the sinner's heart is really reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. So that we begin to love God before we know that he begins to love us. Repent and be converted, not because your sins are already, but that they may be blotted out. (Acts iii. 19.)

Ther. This is not agreeable to my experience. 1st. I had the love of God, as a reconciled God, manifested to my soul. 2d. Hereupon I believed that God was my reconciled God and Father. 3d. And so I loved God because he first loved me. And, indeed, it is plain the apostle taught that God loves us before we love him—"Not that we loved God, but that he loved us." He loved us before we loved him.

Paul. But think a little, O my Theron! You do not maintain that a sinner is actually entitled to the love of God, as his reconciled God and Father, before he believes in Christ. This is beyond all dispute inconsistent with the whole tenor of the gospel; for unbelievers are condemned and under the wrath of God. (John iii. 18, 36.) "We are justified by faith, and not before faith." (Rom. v. 1.)

Ther. As to faith and justification, I choose to defer these subjects to another time. But pray tell me, how do you understand these words?

Paul. As to the love of God towards us, there is, 1st. Electing love, whereby God "chose us in Christ to salvation before the foundation of the world." 2d. Redeeming love towards

the elect, spoken of in 1 John iv. 9, 10. "He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 3d. There is the sovereign grace and love of God, which is exercised in awakening, convincing, and converting elect sinners. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ;" "By grace are ye saved." 4th. There is the love of God, as a reconciled Father, towards those that are converted and become his children, through Jesus Christ. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Now the love of God, as a reconciled Father, none enjoy but those who are already the children of God; and they enjoy it, as our blessed Savior teaches, in consequence of their loving him and keeping his commands. And such was the state of the saints the apostle John is speaking of. They knew that they were the children of God, and that they should be saved; and they lived daily in a sense of God's love, as their reconciled Father; for they loved God and kept his commands.

"But how came we in this blessed and happy state?" might they say; "once we were dead in sin, and enemies to God. Now, with open face we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and love him, and rejoice in his love. Once we were under condemnation and wrath; now, children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! And whence is all this? Not from any goodness in us, but of God's mere sovereign grace. He loved us before we loved him; yea, before the foundation of the world; and we now love him because he first loved us. Yea, we never should have loved him, had not he first loved us, and redeemed us by the blood of his Son, and quickened us when dead in sin by his Holy Spirit, and opened our eyes to behold his glory and beauty. Wherefore, seeing God is so infinite in his love and goodness towards us, let us imitate him, and love one another."

Pray, my dear Theron, take your Bible once more, and read from the 7th to the 21st verse, in the 4th chapter of the first Epistle of John. Read the whole paragraph critically, and you may easily see that this is the sum of the apostle's reasonings: "Beloved, let us love one another. This is the duty I urge

you to; and this is the argument I use—God is love. And if we are born of God, if we are made partakers of his nature, we shall love our brother. If we do not love our brother, our pretences to regeneration are a lie. If we do love our brother, we are born of God; for God is love. That God is love, is plain from the work of our redemption by Christ. That the benevolence, love, and goodness of the divine nature is self-moving, is plain, because there was no goodness in us to move him to give his Son to die for us. For we did not love God. We were enemies. God first loved us. Yea, if God had not pitied us in our lost state, and redeemed us, and brought us to know him, we should never have loved him. We love him now, but we never should have done so, had not he first loved, redeemed, and converted us. Wherefore, full of gratitude, we love him because he first loved us. And as the goodness of the divine nature is thus self-moving, and as God's heart is so full of benevolence and love, and as we partake of the very same nature by our new birth, so we should exercise it constantly in loving our brethren. The goodness of the divine nature, as manifest in our redemption, which is continually before our eyes, and its beauty, which constantly affects our hearts, should change us into the same image, and make us full of love to our brethren."

Ther. If, by the beauty of the divine nature, you only mean that God appears lovely, merely because he loves us, I can understand you; and can love God on this account. But when you speak of loving God for himself, I know not what you mean, nor how it is possible for any to love God on this foot.

Paul. There is an essential difference between being charmed with the beauty of the divine goodness, and being ravished merely to think that God loves me. The one will infallibly change us into the divine image, agreeable to Matt. v. 44, 45, 48; the other will never raise us higher than to the publican's standard, (ver. 46, 47.)

Besides, my dear Theron, tell me, do you verily believe that it is more to God's honor to be your particular friend, than it is to be by nature God? Does his friendship to you make him shine brighter than all the infinite glories of his eternal Godhead? And is he more worthy to be loved and worshipped because he loves you, than for his own real divinity? Or, as the Papists canonize saints for their extraordinary attachment to the Roman Church, and then pay them religious worship, so do you deify God for being your particular friend, and give him divine worship merely on this account; but for which you

would be full of "hatred and heart-risings against him?" We used to think divine love and worship ought by no means to be paid to a mere creature, how kind soever to us. But if you leave divinity, if you leave the glory of the divine majesty as he is in himself, out of the account; and love and worship him merely for his love to you, and make him your God merely for that; and so pay him divine worship, not because he is by nature God, but because he is your particular friend; how will you free yourself from the guilt of idolatry? To be sure, you are so far from paying a proper regard to real divinity, that you show yourself quite blind to his beauty and glory, and stupid to that which charms all the heavenly world; and in their eyes you must appear in a very selfish, impious, contemptible light, in your highest raptures.

Had Nicaulis, the queen of Sheba, on her return from King Solomon's court, in all her conversation, dwelt only on the royal bounty which he gave her, and expressed her love to him on this account alone, wondering how any man of sense could talk of the fine and charming accomplishments of the king, and what they meant by loving him primarily and chiefly on the foot of his own personal merit; would not those gentlemen who had been her attendants in her tour to Jerusalem have been tempted to look upon her as a person of no taste; that the fine and charming accomplishments of even Solomon, in all his glory, could not touch her heart? And I dare say her name would not have been mentioned in the Jewish history, unless with infamy. But what was Solomon's glory, compared with the glory of the King of the whole universe!

What would the queen of Israel have thought, had the daughters of Jerusalem said unto her, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?" Would she not soon have replied, with the fervor of an ardent lover, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; yea, he is altogether lovely"? And have not the regenerate infinitely more reason to adopt this language? For as natural men have by nature a taste to the beauties of the natural world, so spiritual men have by grace a taste to the beauties of the moral world. As King Solomon appeared exceeding glorious to the queen of Sheba, so the Lord Jehovah, who sits on a throne high and lifted up, as the thrice holy Monarch of the universe, appears exceeding glorious, not only to angels in heaven but to saints on earth; and they are all ready, in the language of the queen of Sheba, to say, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee." The infinite amiableness of God, as he is in

himself, is the chief source of the refined joys of the heavenly world. To behold such a God, to love and be beloved by him, is the heaven of heaven itself; and the more exalted his glory and beauty, the sweeter their love and joy. His being what he is in himself, so infinitely desirable, renders it so infinitely happifying to them, to enjoy him forever as their own. (Psal. lxxiii. 25.)

Ther. Perhaps there may be more in what you plead for, than I have been wont to think. And as I design fully to consider these things, that I may be under the best advantages to make up a right judgment, pray point out some of the chief differences between these two kinds of love to God.

Paul. 1st. If I love God for himself, God, even God himself, is the object beloved; and the act by me performed, is properly an act of love to God. If I love God merely because he loves me, I am the object really beloved; and the act is properly an act of self-love. 2d. The one supposes the glory and amiableness of the divine nature is really seen; the other may be where the heart is wholly blind to this kind of beauty, as it does not arise from a sense of God's amiableness, but altogether from selfish considerations. 3d. If God is loved for himself, the whole of God's law and government will also be loved, as in themselves beautiful, holy, just, and good, a transcript and image of God's nature. If God is loved merely because he loves me, I shall be reconciled to God's law and government, only as considering myself safe from the stroke of divine justice; and I shall be reconciled to God's decrees only as considering them in my favor. Not really caring what becomes of the rest of my fellow-men, I shall pretend to like God's plan of government as being safe myself, but for which I should, as your author expresses it, be full of "hatred and heart-risings in spite of my heart." M. If God is loved for himself, every thing which bears his image will, for the same reason, be loved, as being in itself lovely, as resembling the standard of true beauty; but otherwise, all my love towards all other things of a religious nature will be merely selfish.

For instance, I shall love the children of God merely on selfish accounts; as, because they love me, belong to my party, etc. So the hypocritical Galatians once loved St. Paul, as they thought he had been the means of their conversion; but when he was afterwards obliged to tell them some truths which they disrelished, their love grew cold; yea, they rather inclined to join with the false teachers, his avowed enemies, who were constantly endeavoring to undermine that scheme of religion which was dearer to him than his life. This proved they

never really loved Paul himself, who still continued the same he was before. So the Israelites seemed to love God much at the side of the Red Sea, while they thought he loved them; but the waters of Marah soon brought them to different feelings. 4th. If God is loved for himself, it will be natural to imitate him, and delight to please him; for we always love to imitate and please those who are really dear to us, and their "commands are not grievous." But you know the character of the men "who sang God's praise, but soon forgat his works." And "forty years long was he grieved with this generation." They were much engaged to have themselves pleased; but cared not what became of God's honor when they were crossed. 5th. If God is loved for himself, then the enjoyment of God will be our highest happiness. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Whereas, if we love God only in a firm persuasion of his love to us, as himself cannot be our portion, so we shall naturally seek rest elsewhere; for nothing can be a portion to our souls, which is not loved for itself. The man that marries merely for money cannot expect to find that delight and satisfaction in his companion, which he might in a person agreeable to his taste; and no wonder he absents himself from her company, and contrives excuses to justify himself. Wherefore, 6th. If God is loved for himself, as there is thereby a foundation laid for a conformity to him in the temper of our minds, and a life of communion with him; so hereby it may be discovered, that we, thus bearing his image, are really his children. And so an assurance of our good estate may be obtained from our sanctification; which on the other scheme never can, if we will be honest to our own souls. As well may the rush grow without mire, and the flag without water; yea, as well may you build a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip, says your Aspasio, as one in your scheme maintain assurance from a consciousness of his own sanctification.

Here, my dear Aspasio, the conversation stopped. I sat silent, all my thoughts turned inward. "O my soul," said I to myself, "this is my very case. My sanctification has for a long time been no more to be seen than the stars at noon. I have found, by sad experience, no assurance could possibly be obtained this way. To seek assurance by marks and signs of grace, only cherishes my doubts, and increases my perplexity. And what if this is indeed the very reason, that really I never had any true grace?" I was shocked, my heart recoiled. "O dreadful! an heir of hell! after all my high-raised hopes!"

Thus I sat silent several minutes, quite lost in self-reflection,

till Paulinus began again to speak. "I must dismiss these subjects at present," said I, "and retire. Your thoughts on the remaining points I hope to hear at a more convenient season." Paulinus replied, "When you please, sir, I am at your service." "To-morrow evening I will wait upon you," said I. After he had expressed many kind wishes for my good, and I had asked his prayers, I retired to my closet; and, O my Aspasio, you may easily guess how I spent the night. For "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

DIALOGUE II.

TUESDAY EVENING, *Dec.* 12, 1758.

I RETURNED at the appointed time; and, after some agreeable conversation on general subjects, I introduced the second question. But Paulinus insisted I should tell my opinion first, which I did, in the very words of the best writers I had seen. Thus we began:

Paul. Pray tell me exactly what justifying faith is, in your opinion.

Ther. "It is a real persuasion, in my heart, that Jesus Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for me. Faith is a hearty assurance that our sins are freely forgiven us in Christ. Justifying faith hath, for the special object of it, forgiveness of sins. A man doth not believe that his sins are forgiven him already, before the act of believing; but that he shall have forgiveness of sins. In the very act of justification, he believes his sins are forgiven him, and so receives forgiveness.* Faith is a real persuasion that the blessed Jesus hath shed his blood for me, fulfilled all righteousness in my stead: that through his great atonement and glorious obedience he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and all spiritual blessings." And the

* Marrow of Modern Divinity, with Notes, p. 158, 273.
N. B. Wendelinus is the author of the last-mentioned definition of faith, who is one of the authorities Mr. Hervey refers to. And as this definition seems to have been made with care, and to be very exact, so it is worthy of particular attention. My sins are not forgiven, but I believe they are forgiven, and so receive forgiveness; i. e. I knew it was not true, but I believed it to be true, and so it became true. Which exactly answers to the account Mr. Marshal gives of faith; of which more presently.

language of faith is this: "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine. God has freely loved me; Christ has graciously died for me; and the Holy Ghost will assuredly sanctify me in the belief, the appropriating belief, of these precious truths." This appropriating and taking home to myself the blessings of the gospel, is of the essence of faith. H. "It is not a persuasion that we have already received Christ and his salvation, or that we have been already brought into a state of grace, but only that God is pleased graciously to give Christ and his salvation unto us, to bring us into a state of grace." M. To sum up all in a word: Faith is a persuasion that I am one for whom Christ died, with a design to save; that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me. And all this is believed by the direct act of faith, antecedent to any reflection. H.

Paul. O my Theron, be you not mistaken! Is not faith usually called coming to Christ, receiving Christ, trusting in Christ, believing in Christ, flying to Christ? etc.

Ther. It is. But this is an after-act, and is built upon the former. First, I believe that pardon, grace, Christ, and all his spiritual blessings, are mine; and then I trust I shall assuredly be saved by Christ. First, I believe that Christ died for me in particular, and that God is my God; and this encourages me to come to Christ and trust in him. If I did not know that Christ loves me, I should not dare to trust in him. Wherefore, in the first direct act of faith, I believe that God is "reconciled to me," that Christ has "rescued me from hell," and "established my title to all the blessings included in the promises." Just as my tenant believed me when once I sent him word "that I had cancelled his bond and forgiven his debt;" just as my servant believed me when I freely gave him a little farm; and just as you believed the estate your own which was bequeathed to you in your late father's last will. You first believed your title good, and then took possession of it as your own. I am sensible this is not what is called the orthodox opinion; it is more "refined and exalted," and more exactly agreeable to the truth.

Paul. But, my dear Theron, how do you know that Christ, pardon, grace, and glory, are yours? What evidence have you for your belief — a belief on which you venture your precious soul for a whole eternity?

Ther. The Holy Scripture clears up my title, and enables me to appropriate to myself, in particular, what is given, granted, and made over, in the written word, to sinners in general. To explain myself: it is written, "To us a Son is given." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." "Christ died

for our sins." "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life." "Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." And by faith I appropriate all this to myself. I believe that Christ is mine, given to me in particular; my sins in particular were laid on him; he died for my sins in particular; he is my bread; eternal life is mine; my sins are forgiven, my transgressions are blotted out. And so, according to Scripture, "I believe the love that God hath to me." "I believe I shall be saved." "I believe Christ loved me, and gave himself for me." With Thomas I say, "My Lord, my God!" "I am persuaded in my heart that Jesus is my Lord, who bought me with his blood; that Jesus is my God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for my good. This is faith, according to the common acceptation of the word 'believe.' And this faith our Savior himself allows to be genuine. And if I should not thus believe, I should make God a liar."

Paul. How make God a liar, my dear Theron? Hath God said that Christ died with an absolute design to save all mankind? And hath God expressly declared that he will save them all? that you think yourself obliged in conscience, while out of Christ, to believe he died with an absolute design to save you, and that God will certainly save you; and that it would be no better than making God a liar, not to believe so?

Ther. No, no; God hath never said any such thing, expressly or implicitly. Yea, God has plainly enough declared, that Christ died with an absolute design to save only the elect; and that in fact, no other ever will be saved. This we are all agreed in.*

Paul. Did you know then that you was one of the elect before you believed? That you thought yourself bound in conscience to believe that you should be saved, lest otherwise you should be guilty of so horrible a sin as to make God a liar?

Ther. No; by no means. For no man can know his election till after faith and justification.

Paul. How then could you make God a liar? Is it any where declared in his written word, that your sins in particular are forgiven, and that you should be saved?

Ther. No; so far from it, that before I believed my sins were forgiven, they were in fact not forgiven; but I was under condemnation and wrath.

* Boston on the Two Covenants, p. 27, 34. N. B. He says, Isa. liii. 6, (a text Theron just now applied to himself,) respects only the elect. p. 30.

Paul. But surely here is some great mystery. You say, you believe that Christ died with a design to save only the elect, and that you did not know that you was elected; and yet you believed that Christ died with a design to save you. You say, your sins were not forgiven before you believed; and yet you believed they were forgiven. You seem, my friend, to be so far from any danger of making God a liar, by not believing, that rather you make him a liar by believing your sins are forgiven, when God says they are not. At least, to make the best of it, I do not see what evidence you have for your belief. Nay, how can such a faith as yours possibly be the result of evidence, and of a rational conviction? For the case does not seem to admit of any evidence. For how can there be any evidence to prove the truth of that which as yet is not true? Pray, unfold this riddle, like a right honest man, and tell me the secret of the whole affair.

Ther. This matter is honestly stated, and that with great exactness, in Mr. Marshal's Gospel Mystery; a book my Aspasio values next to the Bible. These are the very words of that celebrated author: "Let it be well observed, that the reason why we are to assure ourselves in our faith that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us in particular, is not because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becometh a certain truth when we believe; and because it never will be true, except we do in some measure persuade and assure ourselves that it is so. We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already by Scripture, or sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it. Yea, we are without Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. Only we are bound, by the command of God, thus to assure ourselves; and the Scripture doth sufficiently warrant us that we shall not deceive ourselves in believing a lie; but according to our faith, so shall it be to us." "This is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds; and, therefore, no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings. We are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no; so that we cannot deny our assent, without rebelling against the light of our senses, reason, or conscience. But here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the Spirit of God;" laboring for it, as

my dear Aspasio explains the words, "incessantly and assiduously, until our Lord come." "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." *

Paul. I have on the table a paper containing twelve short queries, relative to the point in hand. If it is not disagreeable, I will read it to you.

Ther. If you please, sir; I should be glad to hear it.

Paul. It was wrote this very day, on reading that remarkable passage in Mr. Marshal you have just recited, and on a general view of the controversy, as stated by him and by your friend Aspasio, and as expecting to see you this evening.

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* Reader, stop, and think a minute! What is it that we are thus to assure ourselves of, without any evidence from Scripture, or sense, or reason? That God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life? No. For this is true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or not; and it is a truth plainly taught in Scripture. What then? "That God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to me in particular," according to Mr. Marshal. That "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine," as Mr. Hervey expresses it. And now it is true enough, this is "not declared in Scripture; is not true before we believe it; and we must believe without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." Thus the point is stated in a book Mr. Hervey approves of next to the Bible.

Objection. "No," says Mr. Gelatly, a great admirer of Mr. Hervey, "no such thing. We do not believe we have a saving interest in Christ, we only believe we have a common interest. A saving interest is not made over to us in the gospel grant; but a common interest is ours by a free deed of gift. Wherefore, I believe I have a common interest. I claim it, I demand it, I take possession of it as my own; and this is faith." (See Mr. Gelatly's Observations, etc., p. 76, 88.)

Answer. You claim, you take possession! Of what? my friend. Of a common interest. This is yours, you say; this you claim, this you possess; and this is *all*. A common interest, and no more. You claim no more, and you can have no more on this foot, for you acknowledge your deed of gift conveys no more. But Messrs. Hervey and Marshal claim more. They take possession of a saving interest as their own, and therefore honestly confess they have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason; and if Mr. G. should venture to put in as high a claim I hope he will make as honest a concession.

Obj. "Yes," but "I believe that Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him." (p. 103.)

Ans. "Salvation!" But this is a saving interest, not made over in your deed of gift, as you own. The Bible nowhere declares, that you in particular "shall have life and salvation." You believe now, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason," just as Mr. Marshal says. So I see your faith is the same as his; but he is frank and open-hearted, and tells the honest truth to the world.

Obj. But if a common interest in Christ, and salvation are mine, by the free and absolute grant of the gospel, this gives me a warrant, by faith, to claim and take possession of Christ and salvation as my own forever; that is, to believe that Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him. (p. 88, 90.)

Ans. That is, if a common interest is mine, this gives me a warrant to believe a saving interest is mine. And so, according to Mr. Marshal, "though a saving interest is not mine before I believe, yet if I believe it is mine, then it will be mine." But of this more presently.

TWELVE QUERIES.

Query 1. Did God ever require any one of the sons of Adam to believe any proposition to be true, unless it was in fact true before he believed it? We are required to believe there is a God; that Christ is the Son of God; that he died for sinners; that he sent his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature; that he that believeth shall be saved; that he that believeth not shall be damned; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. In a word, we are required to believe all the truths taught in the Bible. But then, they are all true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not.

Quer. 2. Are not all these truths contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which it is necessary for us to know and believe in order to our salvation? Is not this a point which has ever been strenuously maintained by all Protestants? But are they not all true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not?

Quer. 3. Is it safe to venture our souls for eternity, merely on the truth of a proposition nowhere contained in the Bible? "Theron, Christ died for thee in particular, and thy sins are forgiven." Is this proposition contained in the Bible? Is it taught in Scripture? If it had been, would it not have been true before it was believed? and whether it was ever believed or no? If Theron ventures his soul upon the truth of this proposition, and finds himself at last deceived, can he blame the Bible? Was it contained in that book? Did he learn it thence? Nay, he owns he did not. But then he thinks God has required him to work up himself to such a belief, and promised that, according to his faith, so shall it be unto him; and yet owns, he has no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason.

Quer 4. Did God ever require any one of the sons of Adam to believe any thing to be true, without sufficient previous evidence that it was true? Look through the Bible. Where shall we find one instance? Not in the Old Testament, nor in the New Testament; no, not even in one of these particulars, these writers usually refer to, to illustrate and confirm this "strange kind of assurance."

Not in Abraham, who against hope believed in hope that he should have a son, Sarah being not only barren, but past the age of child-bearing. For he had sufficient evidence for the thing he believed; even the known, the plain, the express promise of the God of truth.

Not in the Israelites, who left Egypt, set out for Canaan, but

could not enter in because of unbelief. For they had sufficient evidence to believe, that God was able and willing to do all that he had engaged;* and that if they would trust his wisdom, power, goodness, and fidelity, be at his beck, and march under his banner, and "wholly follow him," they might safely enter, and easily conquer the country, although their walls were built up to heaven, and the sons of Anak were there.

Not in David, who believed that he should be king of Israel; for he had sufficient evidence for his belief, from the express promise of Almighty God.

Not in the pious Jews in Babylon, (Isa. i. 10;) for, although they could not see the least probability, from outward appearances, of their return to their beloved Zion, yet they had a good warrant to trust in the Lord, and stay themselves upon their God, who was able, and who had expressly and absolutely promised, at the end of seventy years, to bring them back.

Nor in Peter walking on the water; for he had sufficient evidence, from Christ's commanding him to come to him, to believe that Christ would keep him from sinking.

Nor in the disciples, so often upbraided for their unbelief of Christ's resurrection; for they had sufficient evidence that he was risen. Nor in those who had the faith of miracles, and could say to this mountain, "Be thou removed and cast into the sea;" for they had sufficient evidence to believe it would be done, resulting from Christ's express promise in the case. When they were called to work miracles in confirmation of the Christian religion, they had not the least reason to doubt in their hearts, but that he who had authorized them, would, for his honor's sake, and for his word's sake, perform the miracles which they were inspired to declare should be done. Nor in those who came to Christ to be healed; for they had sufficient evidence to believe that Christ was able to do it. Nor, indeed, is there one instance in the Bible of God's requiring a man to believe any

* God's promise (Exod. iii. 17) to bring the Israelites to Canaan, did not absolutely oblige him to bring every individual, man, woman, and child, there. Some might die by the way, and yet God not be a liar. (Ex. xxxii. 27, 28.) Yea, many did die by the way; and yet it is "impossible for God to lie." That phrase in Num. xiv. 34, proves that God did not think himself bound by his promise to bring them every one there, let them be ever so perverse. But if God was not absolutely obliged to bring every one there, then no one in particular, when they set out from Egypt, had sufficient warrant to believe and say "I shall get to Canaan; I know I shall: God has promised, and I should make him a liar if I did not believe that I, in particular, should get safe there." After that declaration in Num. xiv. 31, Caleb and Joshua had a good warrant for such a belief. And so, after we know we are united to Christ by a true and lively faith, we may be certain that we shall get safe to heaven at last. (John iii. 16, and v. 24.) But not before: as there is no absolute promise of salvation to all mankind. (Gal. iii. 29. John iii. 18. Rom. ix. 15, 21. 2 Cor. i. 20. Compare Josh. i. 6, with Josh. vii. 5, and Heb. vi. 18. See also Num. xxxii. 15.)

thing whatsoever, without sufficient previous evidence of its truth.

How incredible, therefore, how infinitely incredible, is it that God should first put the Bible into our hands, as rational creatures, and charge us strictly to adhere to it, on pain of eternal damnation, (Rev. xxii. 18,) and then suspend the eternal salvation of all mankind on their believing a thing to be true, nowhere contained in the Bible; yea, of the truth of which they have no evidence, from "Scripture, sense, or reason;" yea, which as yet is not true, but flatly contradictory to divine revelation; and sentence men to eternal damnation, for not believing what they would be glad to believe, with all their hearts, had they sufficient evidence of its truth; for there is no man but would be glad to know that, instead of the eternal torments of hell, he should have the eternal joys of heaven.*

* Some who are in this scheme, pretend to be great enemies to carnal reason. But they must renounce all reason, and the Bible too, or one would think they never can be full proof against conviction. But they say we must become fools for Christ. But do they really think that Christianity is, in fact, a foolish religion? Christianity, which is the wisdom of God, and which exhibits a most exact picture of all the divine perfections; a picture infinitely brighter than that which was given in the creation of the world. The work of our redemption is the master-piece of all God's works, and Christianity the brightest display of all God's perfections. Its wisdom, glory, and beauty, are such as gain the attention of all the exalted geniuses of the heavenly world. (1 Pet. i. 12.) What an infinite reproach to God and his Son is it then, for us mortals to misrepresent this rational, divine, and glorious religion, so as to make it, in fact, one of the most foolish, inconsistent, and absurd things imaginable; and then, to hide the shame of its nakedness, raise an outcry about carnal reason! By this means, many poor sinners have been early led to look upon experimental religion as a silly, foolish thing; although in reality there is nothing in it, but what is as rational as the mathematics. Yea, if true religion were not perfectly rational, how could it please the infinitely wise God who is the fountain and source of all reason; how could it be suited to raise, exalt, and ennoble rational creatures; or how could it deserve to be called by the name of wisdom, by Solomon, the wisest of men?

Objection. "But if the religion of the Bible is so rational a thing, why are not Socinians, Pelagians, etc., pleased with it, who so greatly cry up reason?"

Answer. Merely because it is so contrary to the darling corruptions of their hearts. Our blessed Savior, who well understood human nature, and the nature of his own religion, affirms that this is the true cause. (John iii. 19—21.) Had they but good hearts, they would be charmed with the wisdom and glory of the Christian religion, (John viii. 47,) even as the inhabitants of heaven be. (Eph. iii. 10.) For, after all their glorying, their own schemes, although a little better glossed over, yet in reality are as inconsistent and absurd as this that Theron pleads for. In the apostolic age, divine truths were set in so clear a light, that the worst of heretics were obliged, were necessitated to see, that they were inconsistent with themselves; and so were forced to be self-condemned, as is plainly implied in Tit. iii. 10, 11. An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject: knowing that he is such, is subverted, and sinneth, *being condemned of himself.* And, no doubt, there is light enough in the Holy Scriptures, to produce the same still, were it brought out and held before the eyes of heretics in this age, (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17;) for the truth, and only the truth, is, or can be, universally consistent; but all false schemes, follow them up, will appear to be inconsistent. Reason is wholly on the side of truth; and true religion is the only religion that is perfectly rational and consistent throughout.

Quer. 5. Is not this the difference between faith and presumption, as the words are commonly understood among mankind, namely: that, in the one, we believe because we have sufficient evidence; in the other, without any evidence at all? And is not this the constant character of all self-deceived hypocrites, that they have "a real persuasion in their hearts" of the love of God to their souls, and a confident expectation of eternal life, without any real evidence? (Matt. vii. 21, 27. Luke xiii. 25—27; xviii. 9. 11.)

Quer. 6. Is not this faith analogous to that which the devil tempted our Savior to exercise, when "he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence; for it is written, he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, and in their hands they shall hold thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone?" Here was a promise, a precious promise, out of God's own word. And he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar. The devil urged our Savior to appropriate, and take it home to himself in particular; and be verily "persuaded in his heart" he should be safe, although he cast himself down. However, on a critical examination of the texts the devil recited, there could be no evidence from that of safety to Christ, if he had cast himself down. So, therefore, he must believe really without any evidence from "Scripture, sense, or reason;" and the devil would have had him think that, according to his faith, so should it be to him.

Quer. 7. If the devil attempted thus to delude our blessed Savior himself, by misapplying a precious promise, has he not courage? Has he not power? Has he not will to attempt to deluge poor sinners in a like manner; that thereby, devil as he is, he may accomplish their eternal ruin? And are we not forewarned from heaven of a false spirit, and charged not to believe every spirit? For that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

Quer. 8. Did ever Christ or his apostles define faith to be "a real persuasion that Christ died for me in particular, and that pardon, grace, and glory are mine?" They call it coming to Christ, receiving Christ, trusting in Christ, believing in Christ, believing on Christ, etc.; but never call it believing Christ is mine, and that my sins are forgiven. It is true, the saints in the Old Testament, and in the New, usually speak the language of assurance. And it is as true, they had sufficient evidence of their good estate from their sanctification. This was their evidence. They knew no other. All who pretended

to belong to Christ without this, were branded for liars. (1 John ii. 4.) But where do we ever read of their endeavoring to work up themselves to an assurance, professedly without any evidence?

Quer. 9. Is there one, in all St. Paul's catalogue of believers, in Heb. xi., whose faith consisted in believing without any evidence?

Quer. 10. Were ever any awakened sinners invited and urged to believe, by Christ or his apostles, and told at the same time that the thing they were to believe was not true as yet? Nor had they any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, it ever would be true; but, however, most solemnly assured by the promise and oath of God, if they would venture to believe without any evidence at all in the case, it should be according to their faith. Was this the thing the apostles dwelt upon in all their preaching? was this the thing they urged awakened sinners to, with all their might? No: they never heard of it; neither came it into their hearts to think that this was justifying faith.

Quer. 11. Is not the thing believed a lie? It was not true before it was believed, as is granted. But believing an untruth to be true, cannot make it true. It cannot, according to reason; it cannot, according to Scripture; it cannot, according to experience. It was never known, since the world began, to produce this effect in any one instance, unless in this case; and we have no evidence from Scripture, sense or reason, that it ever did in this.

Quer. 12. Is it not astonishing, and one of the most unaccountable things in the world, that a rational creature, with the Bible in his hands, should ever be able to work up himself to believe what he knows is not yet true; and what he knows he has no evidence that it ever will be true? No wonder these men are so much troubled with doubts. No wonder they are afraid they believe a lie. No wonder they are obliged so much to strive and struggle against this unbelief; a kind of unbelief we nowhere read of in the Bible; a kind of conflict no saint ever had, that stands on Scripture record, as themselves are obliged to own. To struggle daily to believe, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason; to have this for their Christian conflict, — an unheard-of conflict in the apostolic age, — instead of struggling against this kind of unbelief, Scripture, sense, and reason all join to justify it. As nothing can be plainer than that we ought never to believe any thing with more confidence than in exact proportion to our evidence. To do otherwise, and that professedly, is the most presumptuous

thing in the world. And to think by being thus strong in the faith we shall give glory to God, is the very first-born of delusion that even Satan himself ever begot in the heart of a fallen creature.*

Paul. Thus, my dear Theron, you may see a little, by these queries, what I think of this kind of faith. But there is one most mysterious thing I desire you to explain. Not why you doubt; I do not wonder you are often assaulted with doubts. Nor do I wonder your friend Aspasio meets with the same conflict. You are both men of too much sense and reason not to feel yourselves a little shocked sometimes, in spite of all your principles. But this I wonder at; I am surprised how you ever came to believe. Pray be so kind as to give me a particular narrative, how faith was wrought in your heart.

Ther. I had lately made a visit at Philenor's, with my dear

* H. p. 355, 342, 243, 369. Wendelinus, and other ancient and modern writers, without the least scruple say that, in the direct act of justifying faith, I believe "my sins are forgiven;" "God is reconciled to me," &c., &c. Others, who seem to be in the same scheme, are more cautious in their expressions, and, to avoid the charge of "believing a lie," they word themselves so ambiguously, that it is very difficult to know what they mean; for it has often been urged against this scheme, "If faith consists in believing my sins are forgiven, then they are forgiven before I believe, or else I believe a lie." And it is wonderful to see what methods have been taken by writers to avoid this difficulty. However, when all is said and done, there are in nature but these three ways to solve the difficulty: either, first, to say that our sins are really forgiven before we believe, or, second, that, although they are not, yet, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, they shall be, if we do but believe that they are, or, third, a belief that "my sins are forgiven," must be left out of the definition of justifying faith. The first was the solution of Antinomians in former ages; but it is so contrary to the express declaration of Scripture, (John iii. 18,) that it will not do. The third gives up the whole scheme they contend for; and so that will not do. The second, which Mr. Marshal has taken, bad as it is, is the only one that is left. Now, if they all mean as he does, it is to be wished they would all speak as plain, that we may precisely know what they intend. This would soon bring the controversy to an issue. But when I read their books, they seem to me sometimes to solve the difficulty one way, and sometimes another. Sometimes they represent as though "pardon was mine absolutely before faith;" and sometimes just the contrary. Sometimes they say, "We have the clearest evidence from Scripture for this belief:" and sometimes they say, "We have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." Sometimes faith is raised up to "a persuasion that I in particular am pardoned, and shall certainly have eternal life:" and then again it sinks down into a mere "belief that I have a common interest in gospel offers, such as even reprobates have." And this is all I am to believe; but in a few pages, faith is raised up again as high as ever; so that one knows not where to find them: they seem to be pinched, and not to know how to get out. Therefore, they now run here, and then run there, but know not what to do, to avoid the glaring inconsistence of their scheme: and yet dread to give it up.

At present, for aught that appears, Mr. Marshal's solution is the best that the case can admit of. To be sure, Mr. Hervey thinks it the best; as he esteems Mr. Marshal's Mystery next to the Bible. And, in his preface to Mr. Marshal's book, he says, "I shall rejoice in the prospect of having the Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, stand as a fourth volume to Theron and Aspasio." And, therefore, I have a just warrant, in the present controversy, to consider it as such, and to view all four volumes as containing one complete scheme.

Aspasio; where, in the kindest and most affectionate manner, I was urged to believe; assured it was my duty and interest, and that God's promise and oath were engaged that I should never be made ashamed; but it should be according to my faith. And all the precious promises and gracious invitations in God's holy word were set in order before me in the most moving language, and I was argued out of all my objections. Whereupon, after my return home, as I was walking in my garden, longing to have an interest in Christ, meditating on the promises, striving to take them home to myself, praying for the Spirit to witness with my spirit that I was a child of God, thus earnestly endeavoring to work up myself to this assurance, and thus waiting for the Holy Spirit; as I was thinking on the dying love of Christ, those words seemed to be spoken to me, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Wherefore dost thou doubt of my love to thee, for whom I have shed my blood? I believed; I was full of love and joy, and for several days all my thoughts were taken up about heavenly things. I was weaned from the world. All old things seemed to be passed away, and all things to become new.

Paul. Let any Christless, graceless sinner, in your circumstances, believe as you believed, and, from principles which are natural to mankind, he would feel as you felt. And as all your affections might flow from natural principles, they were no evidence of a supernatural change; as you may see proved at large in a book I have as good an opinion of, as your Aspasio has of Mr. Marshal's Mystery.* Therefore, from these effects of your faith, you cannot argue it was no delusion. Because, if it had been a delusion, it might have produced just the same. You will suffer me, therefore, to inquire, What warrant had you for this belief? For although "all the promises of God are, in Christ, Yea, and Amen," yet, to him that is out of Christ, God is a consuming fire. He is condemned, and the "wrath of God abideth on him." Pray tell me, must not a sinner be in Christ before he is entitled to the promises?

Ther. Yes; for it is his union with, and relation to, Christ, which lays the foundation for his interest in all the blessings purchased by him. First, we are children and then heirs. (Rom. viii. 17.) First, we are ingrafted into Christ, the true vine, and then partake of the sap. (John xv. 1, 7.) First, we are married to Christ, and then we are interested in all his riches and glory.†

* Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections.

† See all this finely represented, as well as rightly stated, H. p. 213, 218. Whether in a consistence with the rest of his scheme, we shall see hereafter.

Paul. A charming truth this, my Theron! And if you will attend to it, and be consistent with yourself, it must lead you back from the paths of error, to the high road which goes directly to the heavenly Zion. For, if we must be in Christ before we are interested in his benefits, we must know that we are in Christ, before we can know our interests in his benefits; and, therefore, the first direct act of faith cannot consist in believing that his benefits are mine. Arietta was first married to Philenor before her debts devolved on him, and all his dignity was derived to her. Had she been carried away with a fond dream, with a full persuasion, that Philenor and all his riches and honor were hers, before marriage, and to the neglect of matrimonial rites, she might have enjoyed the comfort of her dream, but must have really lived in widowhood, and died in debt, never the better for the "wealthy and illustrious Philenor." As this is your Aspasio's own simile, I hope you will the more diligently attend to it. Justifying faith, is that act whereby we, being dead to the law, are married to Christ. (Rom. vii. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2.) And after marriage we may justly say, My beloved is mine, and I am his, (Cant. ii. 16,) but not before. (Eph. ii. 12. John iii. 18.)

Ther. Yes. Let me tell you, that any Christless, graceless sinner in the world, has equal right, with the best saint, to adopt this language, and say, My beloved is mine and I am his: for this ties the very knot; this constitutes the union.

Paul. I think for once, my Theron, your dear Aspasio himself seems to contradict you. You doubtless remember his words. "My beloved is mine and I am his, I dare not say, is the poesy of the mystic ring; but it is the undoubted effect of this divine union." H.

Ther. Sure I am, my dear Aspasio taught me by the first direct act of faith to go to God, and say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." Not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but previous to any reflection on inherent graces. I am not, therefore, first, by reflection, to know, that I am married to Christ, before I call him my own. Yea, rather, I must first know that he is mine, before I can, before I dare, come to him. This, I am sure, is my Aspasio's doctrine.

Paul. But then Christ and all his spiritual blessings are yours, before you are in Christ; which is contrary to what Aspasio affirms, and contrary to the plain sense of the New Testament, as you but just now stated the matter yourself. But, to dwell upon this inconsistence no longer, pray tell me what warrant you had from Scripture to believe that Christ and all his spiritual blessings were yours?

Ther. I was awakened to some sense of my danger of eternal ruin. I longed to believe that my sins were pardoned, and that Christ was mine; but I could not see my title clear. Aspasio told me it was "perfectly clear;" that I had as good a warrant for this belief, as a neighboring clergyman had to take any book in my library, whom I had lately assured "that he was as welcome to any book as though they were all his own." Yea, as good a warrant for this belief, as one of my servants had to believe me, when I gave him a farm for his own.

Paul. Shocking! I would not treat an awakened sinner so, for all the world. But how did Aspasio make it out, that your title to pardon was thus clear, when Mr. Marshal, his favorite author, owns there is no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason?

Ther. He referred me to John vii. 37: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." But you thirst, said he, therefore to you this promise is made. And he was always encouraging me to this belief, by taking a kind notice of my earnest prayers, sorrows, tears, good desires, and sense of unworthiness; and from this quarter my first encouragement arose to hope and believe, that Christ, pardon, grace, and glory, were mine.

Paul. But according to this, O my Theron, your own awakenings, earnest prayers, sorrows, tears, good desires, and sense of unworthiness, laid the first foundation of your faith. This was the secret language of your heart, "to such a one as I am, the promises belong; and so I may safely believe they are all my own." As much your own as your servant's little farm was his. And if your encouragement to believe took its rise from your own inherent qualifications; if your own goodness, in whatever humble form, emboldened you to come to Christ; your hope of acceptance was really bottomed on your own righteousness; and so yours is a self-righteous faith. And if this be the case, a clear sight of the badness of your heart and of the strictness of the law, would entirely kill your faith. (Rom. vii. 9.) If your good desires, like so much money in hand, encouraged you to come to Christ, your courage would fail you, did you know, that the best desires you ever had, according to law and strict justice, merit eternal damnation. Did you thus feel yourself without money, you would not dare to come.

Ther. But is it not true? Are not the promises made to those that "thirst"?—that "labor and are heavy laden"?

Paul. These are not promises, my Theron, which convey a title to pardon and salvation to sinners out of Christ, on condi-

tion of their good desires. They are rather invitations to a union with Christ by a true and living faith. They give a sinner a good warrant to come to Christ — to come "without money and without price;" and those who thus come shall find rest to their souls. But they give no grounds to one out of Christ, encouraged by his own righteousness, to believe that pardon, grace, and glory are his.

Ther. I did not mean that my own good desires, prayers, etc., gave me a right to believe. I had a good right before. As an "abandoned sinner," I had an actual right to Christ and all his benefits by an "actual gift from the Almighty Majesty," just as my servant had to his little farm by my donation.

Paul. After you had given the little farm to your servant, it was his. It was his before he believed it his. Your donation made it his, and not his belief. It was his before he believed it, and whether he believed it or not. He had sufficient evidence to believe it his, previous to his belief. Now, if Christ and all his benefits are yours in this sense, then you were justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal glory, while secure in sin; months, nay, years, before any of your conversation with Aspasio. Yea, your title is as old as the gospel, which you consider as your deed of gift, or as Christ's last will and testament, in which all these legacies were bequeathed to you. Your title, your absolute title, commenced at the death of the testator. "When your old acquaintance Charicles left you a handsome legacy, what did you do to establish your title, and make it your own?"

Ther. "My title was preëstablished by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do but to claim, to accept, and to possess." And I did the very same in the present case. And ever since this first act of faith, "on this unalterable ground, I assert and maintain my title. Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine; because all these precious privileges are consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel." H. This is the proper notion of believing. "When I sent a message to my tenant, assuring him I had cancelled the bond and forgiven his debt, he believed the message to be true. So I give credit to the gracious declarations of my God. So I believe." *

* H. p. 297, 298. And with Theron agrees Mr. Boston, who, in his book on the Two Covenants, maintains that Christ, in his last will and testament, did actually bequeath regenerating grace, justification, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life, freely, absolutely, and unconditionally, to every sinner of Adam's race; and adds, that Christ himself is also the executor of this will, and, by his office as such, obliged to make out all these legacies to all the legatees that are pleased to put in their claim and make their demands. And faith, according to

Paul. To whom are Christ, pardon, grace, and glory consigned over, and conveyed, in the gospel grant? What are their names? Or what are their characters? Who are the men so highly favored? In wills and in deeds of gift, you know, the parties, to whom any thing is bequeathed or given, are mentioned by name. Is it so in the gospel grant? Are all these blessings entailed on believers, or on sinners, as such?

Ther. On sinners, on all sinners of Adam's race; and that considered merely as sinners, as my dear Aspasio proved at large. And that which is thus freely given to every sinner, any sinner in particular has a good warrant to look upon as his own. Thus, then, stands my warrant to believe. All these blessings are given to sinners, as such; but I am a sinner; therefore, all these blessings are given to me.

Paul. That is, "all sinners are justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal life; but I am a sinner; therefore, I am justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal life." But, my dear Theron, if you know what you say, if you really mean as you say, and if you affirm these sentiments are "strictly conformable to the unerring oracles" of God, then all Adam's race are, according to you, actually justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal glory. And thus your devout Aspa-

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him, consists in believing all is mine, and in claiming and taking possession of all as my own, (see p. 114, 199, 214;) and arises from no higher principle than self-preservation. (p. 262, 263.)

St. Paul used to say, "if children, then heirs." But according to this new gospel it is, if sinners, then heirs. And this will be reckoned good news for unregenerate sinners. They are no longer at God's sovereign mercy, according to Rom. ix. 15. Nor need they come as poor beggars, according to Luke xviii. 13. Their title to all things "is perfectly clear," even while unregenerate and out of Christ. And they may come as heirs, who have a legal right to make demands, and put in their claim, and say, "Pardon is mine; I claim it, I demand it as my own." And the executor is obliged to answer their demands, and give out their legacies. This scheme, were it true, would suit corrupt nature even better than the Arminian. As we all had rather have estates left to us by wills than be at the pains to work for them, so it is easier to claim and demand heaven, than to do as the Pharisee did in Luke xviii. 12. Those texts in Heb. viii. 10—12; ix. 15—17, on which they pretend to found their scheme, are plainly nothing to the purpose. For God does not say, "This is the covenant I will make with all the sinful race of Adam; I will write my law in their hearts," etc.; but God says, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel." "But he is not a Jew who is one outwardly." "The children of the promise are counted for the seed." "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." "But if out of Christ, we are condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on us." And we can claim nothing, no, not another moment of time, nor liberty to breathe another breath in God's world. We have not a title to one minute's forbearance; but God may send us to hell this instant. (Rom. iii. 19. Gal. iii. 10.) *Obj.* But it is said to the elder brother, "All that I have is thine." *Ans.* Yes; and with design to describe the temper of a Pharisee's heart. The younger son represented publicans and sinners, and the elder the Pharisees. The poor publican thought he had no claim to make, but lay at mercy. (Luke xviii. 13.) The Pharisees said in their hearts, All is our own.

sio carries matters farther than even the famous Dr. John Taylor, whose key to the apostolical writings is not half so heterodox as this, how much soever condemned by all the friends of vital piety; for he only supposes that all within the visible church are justified, adopted, etc., and not all Adam's race.

Besides, how is all this consistent with the words you just now cited out of Mr. Marshal's Mystery, a book your Aspasio values next to the Bible? "We have no absolute promise or declaration, in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already, by Scripture, sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it. Yea, we are without Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. This is a strange kind of assurance; therefore, no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings. We are constrained to believe other things, on the clear evidence we have that they are true, whether we believe them or no; so that we cannot deny our assent without rebelling against the light of our senses, reason or conscience. But here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves, by the assistance of the Spirit of God."

Yea, how is all this consistent with your own experience, and with the experience of your Aspasio? For if all spiritual blessings are by a deed of gift absolutely made over to all sinners of Adam's race, and that considered merely as such, plainly in the gospel, so that their "title is perfectly clear," then, as true as the gospel is true, all are absolutely entitled to pardon, grace, and glory, before they believe, and whether they believe or not. And I never hear of you, or your friend, doubting the truth of the gospel itself. How then can you have any doubts about your title to heaven? Why was you so backward to believe your title? Or why was your friend so ready to "feel for you, and sympathize with you"? How could it be so difficult to believe, while at the same time he "beheld his title perfectly clear"? Did ever any mortal act thus as to temporal things? Was ever a son of Adam put to great difficulty to believe an inheritance to be his own, when he saw with his own eyes "his title was perfectly clear," and had the deed of gift, well executed, in his own hands? My dear Theron, I am even tempted to doubt whether you yourselves believe your own scheme. Yea, it seems plain, you are all the while afraid you are deluded. And no wonder, says Mr. Marshal, for you have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason. Pray, did

your Aspasio ever attempt to prove his scheme out of the Bible?

Ther. Yes; and once speaking of his differing from the orthodox, I remember he said, "I dare not purchase their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of sentiments. Pray, my dear friend, said he to me, what is the standard of orthodoxy? Is it the word of revelation? This speaks once, yea, twice, nay, some hundreds of times in our favor." H. And, first and last, I am apt to think he mentioned above a hundred texts of Scripture, to prove his point.

Paul. Out of this great number, pray select some of the most plain and full to the purpose, and on which he seemed to lay the greatest stress, and let us carefully examine them.

Ther. There are many texts which teach us that God has given his Son to a lost world. "To us a Son is given." "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." Other texts declare as follows: "God laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He came into the world to save sinners." "Died for the unjust." "Christ died for our sins." "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life." "To you is preached the remission of sins." "The promise is to you, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." In which Scriptures you see Christ and all his spiritual blessings are given and made over to sinners, as such, freely and absolutely; so as that every one has a good warrant to believe they are his own. And if we would give the same credit to God as my tenant did to me, we need not, we could not doubt, but that they are all our own.

"When Jonah, in pursuance of the divine command, cried, and said, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,' without mentioning any by name, 'All, from the least even unto the greatest, believed;' applied the threatening to themselves. When Moses, speaking of the manna, said, 'This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat,' without mentioning any by name, the whole congregation supposed they had all and every one a good right to take and eat. So, when our Savior says, 'My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven,' alluding to the manna, we may all and every one believe it is our own." H.

Paul. Your Aspasio always supposes, that all the blessings of the gospel are granted absolutely, and without any condition; so that we have nothing to do, but to believe they are all our own. Whereas, there is always a condition expressed or implied; for, according to the constant tenor of the gospel, we must first be in Christ, by a true and living faith, before

the blessings of the gospel are ours.* To descend to particulars:

It is true, God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son. For what? To die for us. To what end? That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that is united to Christ by faith, therefore, shall be saved. But those who are out of Christ have no interest in his salvation; but are under a present condemnation; condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on them. "Pardon is mine." No! condemned already. "God is reconciled to me." No! "The wrath of God abideth on me."

It is true. This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life. But this life is in his Son. Therefore, he that is by faith united to Christ, hath eternal life. For he that hath the Son, hath life. But those who are out of Christ, have no interest in this eternal life. "For he that hath not the Son, hath not life."

It is true, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. But who hath an interest in this forgiveness? Who is that blessed man that is justified? Those who are out of Christ? No; but "by him all that believe are justified."

Again, it is true, the promise is to you. And what then? Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. Were their sins already forgiven? No; repent, and be converted, that your sins may, not because they are, but that they may, be "blotted out." But what was their state while impenitent? "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

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* All writers on this scheme maintain, that pardon, grace, and glory are unconditionally and absolutely given, granted, and made over to all sinners of Adam's race; and this absolute grant gives each of us a good warrant to believe "pardon, grace, and glory are mine." Reader, stop and think one minute. If the grant is not absolute, it does not make pardon mine, nor give me a right to believe it mine. If it is absolute, it makes pardon mine before I believe it; and so I am justified before faith. "No, say they, it is not mine before I believe it mine; but if I believe it mine, it is mine." But one would think, if it is not mine before I believe, I believe a lie. My sins are pardoned before I believe, or they are not. If they are pardoned before faith, then I am not justified by faith, but before faith. If they are not, then I believe a lie. "No," says Mr. Marshal, "according to thy faith, it shall be unto thee;" that is, if, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason," I believe that to be true which is not true, it shall become true. This is the heart and soul of their scheme. Keep this in constant view; suffer no ambiguous words to drown your mind; and it is easy to see, that there is not one text in the Bible to their purpose. Yea, they give us an exact definition of delusion, which properly consists in this, namely, "I believe something to be true, which is not true, till in my imagination it seems true; and so I take the comfort of it, as though it were true." Whereas, in saving faith there is no truth believed, but what is plainly revealed in the gospel, as will appear presently.

Lastly, it is true the whole congregation of Israel were welcome to take the manna and eat. And it is true that all mankind are welcome to receive Christ, the true bread, and eat and live forever; for this eating is the same as uniting to Christ, by a true and living faith. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. Therefore, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. But what is the state of sinners out of Christ? Have they eternal life? No! "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

Thus the very texts you build your scheme upon, are all against you. What warrant, therefore, has a sinner, out of Christ, to say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine"? For these precious privileges are not consigned over to him in the everlasting gospel, while in such a state. Nor shall he ever have an interest in them, unless he is first united to Christ by a true and living faith.

Ther. If the curse of the law, which is delivered in general terms, not mentioning Theron by name, belongs to Theron, why do not the promises of the gospel, delivered also in general terms, not mentioning Theron by name, belong to Theron too? The Ninevites, from the least to the greatest, made particular application to themselves.

Paul. The law curses none but those who have already broken it; and the gospel pardons none but those who have already complied with it. Theron has already broken the law, and fallen under the curse. Let Theron comply with the gospel, and he shall be entitled to the blessing. The curse of the law was not yours until you broke it: nor are the blessings of the gospel yours until you comply with it. For it is written, he that believeth not is condemned already — a truth which all unbelievers, from the least even unto the greatest, should, after the example of the Ninevites, make particular application of to themselves. I must, therefore, still repeat it, what warrant from the word of God have you for your faith?

Ther. Moses led the whole congregation of Israel, at the side of the Red Sea, though the greatest part of them were in a graceless state, to call God their God. (Exod. xv. 2.) And to confirm them in this belief, God himself, from Mount Sinai, and generally through all the law of Moses, says, speaking to the whole congregation, "I am the Lord thy God." And in the days of Jeremiah, when there was scarce a good man to be found among them, (Jer. v. 1,) and the generality were devoted to idolatry, and obstinately impertinent, yet to the whole

nation God says, "Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you." And he teaches them to say, "We come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God;" and invites them to look upon him as their Father. And as the Jews were all circumcised at eight days old, and so brought into covenant with God, they had all thereby a good warrant to look upon God as their God, and to believe that he was their Father, and would save them. The same may be said of all baptized persons in the Christian world.

Paul. If this proves any thing to your purpose, it proves that all the Christless sinners in Christendom, how wicked soever, although even buried up in Popish idolatry, are, if they are baptized, all of them married to Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven. Into what strange absurdities and inconsistencies do you run, my dear Theron!

As to circumcision, the Jews in our Savior's day seemed to think that it entitled them to salvation; but our Savior taught them, that notwithstanding their circumcision, they were, while unregenerate, (John iii. 3,) and antecedent to faith and union with Christ, under condemnation and wrath. (ver. 18, 36.) And St. Paul affirms, that the Jew as well as Gentile, notwithstanding their circumcision, stood guilty before God, without any title to life, antecedent to their regeneration and union with Christ by a true and living faith. (Rom. ii. 28, 29; and iii. 1, 2, 9, 19, 28. Gal. iii. 10, 29.) And the same may be said of those who are baptized.

As to the texts of Scripture you refer to, their true sense may be easily seen, if we consider God's covenant with Abraham, in which he promised to be "a God to him and to his seed;" and God's covenant at Mount Sinai, in which he took the whole nation to be his peculiar people. From which he calls himself "the Lord their God;" and on account of which he is called their husband, and they are said to be married to him, and are charged with whoredom and adultery for going after other gods; and are invited to return to him, as a wife to her husband, and to call him their God and Father. Not that they had any title to pardon, grace, and glory, while "uncircumcised in heart." With these observations in mind, it will be easy to understand the language used commonly in the prophets, particularly in Hos. ii. throughout.

Ther. But it is the proper business of faith "to appropriate and take home to ourselves the grace of God, which lies in the common indefinite grant of the gospel." Therefore, as pardon, grace, and glory are all of them given and granted to sinners as such; by faith, I, a sinner, take home these blessings to myself: that is, I believe they are mine.

Paul. Yes. But, my Theron, there is no such absolute, unconditional grant contained in the Bible; nor do the Scriptures teach that faith is of such a nature.

Ther. Yes. But St. Paul declares that "faith is the evidence of things not seen," and exhibits a clear demonstration of our right to enjoy them.

Paul. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If, therefore, the word of God gives a sinner, while out of Christ, no absolute, unconditional right to the blessings of the gospel, faith can see none. Faith cannot see what is not, neither can it believe without evidence. All the believers in St. Paul's catalogue had good evidence for what they believed. But you have no evidence from "Scripture, sense, or reason," for what you believe; as you yourself are obliged to own.

Ther. But all those figurative descriptions of faith, which occur in holy writ, imply this appropriating belief.

Paul. No, my dear Theron, not one of them. Is Christ viewed, in the beginning of St. John's Gospel, as the Creator of all things, who, under the Mosaic dispensation, sustained the glorious character of God and King of Israel, now come to tabernacle among men, come to his own people, as the promised Messiah? He is to be acknowledged, received, and honored, according to his character. But he came to his own, and his own received him not; did not own him for the Messiah, nor believe in, nor honor him as such. Although he was indeed the very God and King of Israel, who of old dwelt in their tabernacle and temple in the form of God, now come to tabernacle in flesh, in the form of a servant, yet they rejected him, called him a deceiver, and crucified him for claiming to be the Son of God, and King of the Jews! But to as many as received him as the promised Messiah, with all their hearts, gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name. Not that believed their sins were pardoned, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason; but that believed in his name, trusted in his mediation, merits, and atonement, that through his name they might obtain forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. (John i. 1, 12.) Is Christ compared to the brazen serpent? We are not to believe that we are healed; but to look to him for healing. Is he compared to a bridegroom? We are not to believe he is our husband; but as chaste virgins to be espoused to him, that by this spiritual marriage he may become our husband. Is he compared to the city of refuge? We are not to believe ourselves safe; but to fly to him for safety. Is he compared to bread

and water? We are not to believe our hunger and thirst are assuaged; but to eat the living bread, and drink the living water, that they may be so. In a word, is he the great High Priest, who has entered into heaven with the blood of atonement in his hand, by and through whom we may come to God for all things, in full assurance of acceptance in his name? We are not to believe that pardon, grace, and glory, are ours; but to draw nigh to God through him, that of God's infinite grace through him, we may be pardoned, sanctified, and saved.

Ther. But David, Job, Habakkuk, Paul, the Council at Jerusalem, yea, all the saints in Scripture, use this appropriating language. They all speak the language of assurance.

Paul. And good reason why; for they all knew they were sincere, godly men, from a consciousness to their own inherent graces; but there is not a saint to be found in the Bible, that believes pardon, grace, and glory, to be his own, without any evidence from "Scripture, sense, or reason." Forgive me, sir, if I should say, this kind of faith the Bible is as great a stranger to, as to the doctrine of purgatory.

Ther. "I know no other justifying faith, but that which relates to the gospel, and believes its report. But here, I find, lies the core and root of our controversy. This is the precise point to be settled: what it is to believe." H.

Paul. No, no, my dear Theron, "the core and root of the controversy" lies not here. You ought to believe the report of the gospel, and all the truths of the gospel, with a full assurance; yea, with all the full assurance of faith. But Protestant writers, for above these hundred years, have been testifying against your kind of faith, because the thing believed is not contained in the gospel. The gospel makes no such report. But the thing believed is a lie. Here, my friend, here lies "the core and root of the controversy," as Mr. Marshal well knew. And it is a little strange, that your Aspasio should not know it too. However, pray tell me what you mean by believing the report of the gospel.

Ther. "The Lord declares by his prophet, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions. To believe, is to subscribe this declaration; to subscribe it with our hand, and profess with our heart, Lord, it is done, as thou hast said." My transgressions are blotted out.

Paul. But, my dear Theron, this declaration was made above two thousand years ago. Do you date your justification so far back? Or do you think the words have had any new meaning put to them by God of late; which two thousand years ago they did not mean?

Ther. No. I appropriate and take home the blessing to myself; and so I believe the report of the gospel.

Paul. This is not to believe what the gospel reports, but rather to make a new gospel. This is not to believe the truths already revealed, but to make a new revelation. That the transgressions of Theron, a Christless sinner, are blotted out, is not taught in this text, nor in any text in all the sacred volume, as you yourself very well know. And if this be what you mean by an appropriating faith, then Mr. Marshal's account of it is very just: it is a believing without any evidence from "Scripture, sense, or reason." *

Ther. But Christ has expressly promised, that "according to my faith, so shall it be to me."

Paul. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" said Christ to the two blind men, who cried, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." They said unto him, "Yea, Lord." To be sure, they had sufficient evidence to believe it, from the miracles he had already wrought. On which our Savior touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you. And what, my Theron, is this to your purpose, who have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, for what you believe? Our Savior never told sinners that if they would believe, pardon, grace, and glory were theirs; it should be unto them according to their faith; but frequently taught, that many who believed

* The whole party maintain, with Wendelinus, that in the first direct act of faith, I believe "my sins are forgiven," and the whole party assert, that before I believed it, "my sins were not forgiven;" therefore the whole party must concede, with Mr. Marshal, that the thing I believe, "was not true before I believed it," and, consequently, that I do believe it, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." For if it was not true, there could be no evidence of its truth; and yet the whole party pretend to ground their belief upon Scripture; so that this is the strangest scheme of religion in this respect, that ever was advanced in the Christian world. The thing I believe as true, is not true before I believe it; and yet I believe it because it is true! It is not contained in Scripture, yet I believe it because it is contained in Scripture! I know it is no part of the gospel revelation, yet I venture my soul upon it for eternity, as the very gospel of Christ! Now, how do these men feel satisfied in themselves, in believing such inconsistencies? Why, thus: "The gospel makes an absolute, unconditional grant of pardon and salvation to all the sinful race of Adam; but I am a sinner of Adam's race; therefore, pardon and salvation are mine." But, then, one would think they were mine before I believed it, and whether I believed it or no. If the grant doth not make them mine, why do I believe they are mine? If the grant does make them mine, then they are mine before I believe; and so we are not justified by faith, but *before* faith, contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. No, say some, "I have by grant a common, but not a saving, interest." But the thing granted is "salvation," and the grant is absolute. Therefore, "I shall be saved." I ought to believe, that "I shall be saved." Yea, they say, I make God a liar, if I do not; but surely, if I believe I shall be saved, I believe I have a saving interest; and so I believe I have, by the grant, what I know is not contained in the grant; and so believe, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason;" and yet I ground my belief wholly upon Scripture. They say, "The grant makes it mine, so as to give me a right

so, would finally be disappointed. (Matt. vii. 21, 27. Luke xiii. 24, 30.)

Ther. Yes, our Savior expressly said, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Paul. Our Savior had cursed the barren fig-tree, and it was dried up from the roots. At which his disciples wondering, our Savior told them, that whenever they were called to perform any miraculous works, and were looking up to God to do them, they must firmly believe he would do the thing, how great soever it was, even although as difficult as to remove a mountain and cast it into the sea. And it is plain, they had sufficient evidence for such a belief, as they knew that God Almighty stood engaged to effect the miraculous works which he commissioned them to declare should be done. (Mark xi. 20, 24.)

Ther. But the apostle James directs all Christians, even when praying for divine wisdom and grace, to "ask in faith, nothing wavering."

Paul. To ask in faith: in the faith of what? Of truths revealed in the gospel, concerning the way of our access to God in the name of Christ our great High Priest, and God's readiness to hear and answer all requests, agreeable to his will, put up unto him in his name. These truths ought to be, these

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to believe it mine, and claim it, and possess it as mine." But then I ought to believe it mine, precisely in the same sense in which the grant makes it mine. Thus, if the grant makes it mine as being a child of Adam, then I ought to believe it mine, as knowing I am a child of Adam. If the grant makes it mine only as being in Christ, then I ought to believe it mine only as knowing that I am in Christ. If the grant only makes a common interest mine, then I ought to believe a common interest only to be mine. If the grant makes a saving interest mine, then I ought to believe a saving interest mine; and what is mine by grant, if the grant is absolute, is mine before I believe it, and whether I believe it or not. No, say they, "It is not mine before I believe; and yet I must believe it mine. I have no evidence from Scripture, and yet my faith is wholly founded on Scripture. The Scripture says no such thing any where; and yet the Scripture plainly says this thing in hundreds of places. My sins are not forgiven; and yet I make God a liar if I do not believe they are forgiven. It is not true as yet, nor do I know it ever will be true; but I must believe it, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason; and in so doing, I believe the report of the gospel, although the gospel never made such a report." If I can believe all these contradictions with all my heart, I am a true believer, and shall be saved. If not, I am blind, carnal, legal; and finally must suffer the pains of eternal damnation for my unbelief. The infidels of the age (and no wonder infidelity prevails) stand by; hear the dispute; shake their sides. The devil says, "So I would have it." The daughter of Zion puts on sackcloth, looks up to heaven, and cries, "Hast thou forsaken the earth, O Lord? When wilt thou return and scatter these clouds, and cause light to break out, spread, and prevail, and darkness and error to flee away? O, when shall that blessed day come, that the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea! When shall Satan be bound, that he may deceive the nations no more!"

truths must be, firmly believed. But in order to our going to God in full assurance of faith, there is no need, I hope, that we believe, as true, things, the truth of which we have evidence of "from Scripture, sense, or reason." Read the second chapter of this epistle, and you may see the apostle James was no friend to a presumptuous faith, a faith built on no evidence.

Ther. But I am invited, in the most affectionate manner, to believe that Christ loves me and will save me. "'As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' Hark! it is the voice of infinitely condescending love, speaking by his ambassador, Sinners, accept my great salvation. Enjoy what I have purchased for you by my dying agonies. Do not suspect my kindness, or refuse my gifts. This will wound me deeper than the spear which pierced my side. O the grace of our exalted King! After all this, can I entertain the least doubt whether I have a permission to believe firmly? Did the judge ever beseech a condemned criminal to accept of pardon? Does the creditor beseech a ruined debtor to receive an acquittance in full? Yet our almighty Lord, and our eternal Judge, not only vouchsafes to offer these blessings, but invites us, entreats us, with the most tender and repeated importunity solicits us, not to reject them." H.

Paul. In these words you are invited to be reconciled to God, and not to believe that God is reconciled to you. You may be even ravished to think of the one, but still be so inattentive to the other as not to take any notice of it, although before you in one of the most remarkable texts in the Bible.

Ther. But we are strictly commanded, by God himself, to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, (1 John iii. 23,) and have God's promise and oath to assure us we shall certainly be saved if we do.

Paul. True. Yet Christ has never taught us that faith consists in believing that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine;" but has given us the strongest assurance, that many who are very confident of their title to heaven shall finally go to hell. (Matt. vii. 22.)

Ther. Yes, sir. Suffer me, in my turn, to put on the airs of assurance, and to affirm, that this is that very notion of faith which was taught, and which was approved as genuine, by our blessed Savior. For "our Lord bears this testimony concerning Thomas: Thomas, thou hast believed." Now then, I think we have got an infallible touchstone. Let us examine what that is which Jesus Christ calls believing. Whatever it be, it is the determination of truth itself, and should pass for a

verdict from which there lies no appeal. And this, this is the confession of Thomas, *My* Lord and *my* God! This, this expresses what our divine Master calls believing. When therefore we confess with our lips, and are persuaded in our hearts, that Jesus is our Lord, who bought us with his blood; that Jesus is our God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good; then we truly believe. We believe, in our Savior's sense of the word; we have that faith which he allows to be genuine.

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, as your all lies at stake, your all for eternity, do take the Bible, and read the whole paragraph with the heart of an honest man.

Ther. I will. Heaven forbid I should act a dishonest part in an affair of such infinite importance! "But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord and my God! Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Paul. No comment is needed. It is impossible the sense of the words can be made plainer. The thing that Thomas was so faithless about was not his particular interest in Christ; nor was this the thing he believed, that Christ died for him in particular. But the resurrection of Christ was the thing, the only thing, in question with him. Overjoyed to see him, feel him, hear him, know him, in the language of fervent love, ready to clasp him in his arms, he cries out, My Lord and my God! Thus, then, stands the argument: because Thomas believed that Christ was risen from the dead, on the clearest evidence, therefore, justifying faith consists in believing that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine," without any evidence at all from "Scripture, sense, or reason." My dear Theron, was ever book abused and perverted, in this apostate world, one half so much as is the Holy Bible?

Ther. But is it not true, with relation to every sinner, and so with relation to me, that "Christ has bought me with his blood, and will exert all his adorable perfections for my good"?

Paul. Must I again put you in mind of what your favorite author so plainly affirms? "We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already, by Scripture, sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves of it. Our assurance is not impressed by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the Spirit of God." And that your Aspasio not only likes the book in general, but heartily approves of this passage in particular, you may be assured from the notice he has taken of it in his preface to Mr. Marshal's Mystery.

Ther. Yes, and I approve it too; for I never supposed it was any where taught in Scripture, that "Christ has bought me with his blood, and will exert all his adorable perfections for my good," and so certainly save me in particular. I know there is no such thing affirmed in Scripture. I never pretended there was. And you have misrepresented our scheme in supposing it follows, from what we affirm of the free grant of the gospel, that we are justified, adopted, and entitled to eternal glory, before we believe. We hold no such thing. There is no such thing revealed in the oracles of truth; and indeed, if there was, I should not need any special assistance of the Spirit in the work of believing. That I should be saved, would be as plain a truth as any other in the Bible. And did I believe the Scriptures to be true, I could not doubt of this, any more than of any other plain truth therein contained: whereas, you know, it is impossible for a man, although he is satisfied the Bible is the word of God, merely by his own strength and reason to bring himself to believe, unless the Spirit first witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God; because, before this, we have no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason. But when "the divine Spirit brings Christ and his righteousness nigh unto us, in the promise of the gospel; clearing at the same time our right and warrant to intermeddle withal, without fear of vicious intromission;" then we can appropriate what lies in the general promise to ourselves in particular; and then we can say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." And then we can see "our title perfectly clear."

Paul. O my dear Theron! and thus at last you give up your warrant from the written Word;* as in fact there is no such

* *You give up your warrant from the written Word.* — By the first direct act of faith, antecedent to any reflection, I believe that "God is reconciled to me." If this supposed truth was contained in and taught by the written Word, it was

thing contained in the Bible; and now your recourse is to the Spirit. But if, in fact, the written word gives you no warrant for this belief; if, in fact, you have no right by the Bible to lay this claim, the Spirit of God has nothing to do in the case. He cannot clear up a right, where there is no right to be cleared up. He cannot clear up a warrant, where there is no warrant to be cleared up. I grant it is the office of the Holy Spirit to open our understandings to understand the Scriptures, and to open our eyes to behold the wonderful things in God's law. But it is not the office of the Holy Spirit, to open our eyes to see truths in the Bible which, in fact, are not there. It is not the office of the Holy Spirit to make us believe a lie; that is, believe that the Bible teaches what in fact it does not teach; or to make us new revelations, nowhere contained in Scripture, on which to venture our souls for eternity. Nor is it the business of faith to believe these new unscriptural revelations, but only to believe with all our hearts the truths already revealed. Or, to use your own words, "I know no other justifying faith, but that which relates to the gospel, and believes its report." But here, sir, lies the wound of your faith, and this is "the core and root of the controversy," that the thing which you believe is not revealed in the Bible, nor is there any evidence from Scripture of the truth of it. And this you know; this you own, and yet still will persist in believing it, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." And, to help yourself out, you call in the aid of the Holy Spirit, to testify to a thing unrevealed, to a lie, a known lie; to testify that something is contained in Scripture, which you know is not contained there. That with full assurance you may say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine; consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel; a title perfectly clear, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason."

O my dear Theron! in matters of this importance, it does not become us to soothe and flatter, but to speak the truth in uprightness. Did you profess to be an Antinomian, and openly declare, "that the elect were justified from eternity, or at least

true before I believed it, as all grant; and so God was "reconciled to me" before the first act of faith. But, they say, it was not contained there, it was not true, God was not "reconciled to me" before I believed. But God's word does not warrant me to believe, as truth, any proposition, the truth of which is not taught in his word. All the truths contained in his word I ought to believe; but I have no right to add or diminish. "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." If we add to God's word, we have no warrant from God's word to believe our additions to be divine. If any doubt of this, let them read 2 Thess. ii. 11.

from the death of Christ; that the Holy Spirit reveals to the elect their justification in God's own time; and that justifying faith consists in believing this new revelation;" then your scheme, however inconsistent with Scripture, would seem, at least, to be consistent with itself. But now, as you state things, you are, (forgive me, my Theron,) you are, I say, neither consistent with Scripture nor with yourself. And your dressing up experimental religion in this light, (while Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians, and Infidels, laugh at the delusion,) tends only to imbolden self-confident hypocrites; and to leave the poor awakened sinner, that has any common honesty in his heart, in a more bewildered case than ever. Or if, by your charming and affectionate manner of address, the poor blind sinner is induced to believe you, he is in infinite danger of being led to settle on a false foundation, to his eternal ruin; for having once believed,—O, dreadful thought!—having once believed, he must never doubt again. He must watch and pray, fight and strive against doubts with all his might, as the dreadful Agag, that must be pursued with fire and sword. That being once deluded, it is a thousand to one but he lives and dies in his delusion!

Ther. But does not the Holy Scripture expressly speak of the witness and seal of the Spirit? (Rom. viii. 16. Eph. i. 13.)

Paul. Yes, it does; but never, never as what any had before faith and justification; as is the case with you. Ye were sealed, says the apostle to the Ephesian saints. But when? before they believe? No; "*after* that ye believed, ye were sealed." And had they this spirit of adoption, before they were already children? No; but because ye are sons, because ye are already members of God's family, therefore, "God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

So that I must needs tell you, my dear Theron, there is not one title in the Bible to countenance your scheme; but it is all over inconsistence, falsehood, and delusion. And if your heart is no better than your head, you are in an infinitely dreadful state. What your heart is, I do not pretend to say. This does not belong to my province; but the scheme of religion you plead for, leads directly to destruction. And would that pilot be esteemed an honest man, who, for fear of giving offence, should sit silent, and suffer the ship to run upon the rocks; rocks under water, which he knew would dash the ship to pieces in a moment, if not avoided?

Ther. But is it not impossible to trust in Christ, unless first we believe that Christ and all his spiritual blessings are ours?

Paul. What would you think, my dear Theron, of a Neonomian, or Arminian, to whom you were opening the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ, if he should thus reply? "It is impossible to trust in Christ and free grace, unless first, for our encouragement, we are conscious our lives are reformed, our sins repented of, and that we are disposed sincerely to endeavor to do our duty. Were I thus prepared, I should dare to trust in Christ, and could hope that God would accept me through him. But without these good qualifications, it is impossible I should dare to trust in Christ."

Ther. I should suppose that his own righteousness was really at the bottom of his faith, and the very thing that encouraged him to believe. And such a man does not so properly trust in Christ, as in his own righteousness. And a faith built on a false foundation, is certainly a false faith.

Paul. And pray, my Theron, what is it that encourages you to trust in Christ? Not any truths revealed in the gospel; but something of which you have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason. A firm persuasion of this emboldens you to trust in Christ; yea, is so entirely the foundation of your trust, that it appears to you impossible, without this previous persuasion, ever to trust in him. Wherefore this persuasion is at the bottom of your trust; and, strictly speaking, you do not so properly trust in Christ, as in that persuasion. Should you now be convinced that this persuasion was a mere delusion, your trusting in Christ would cease in a moment. Just as it is with a self-righteous person, when his eyes are open to see himself. "The commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

Ther. But, "would any person of the least prudence erect his house upon a piece of ground, without a previous conviction that the spot was his own?" H.

Paul. Wherefore, then, we must thus conclude, that all the truths, already plainly revealed in the gospel, which are true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not; that all these truths laid together, although clearly understood, seen in their spiritual glory, firmly believed, approved of, and liked, would not be sufficient to encourage a sinner to trust in Christ; that is, there is nothing in the written word which, let it be ever so well understood, and ever so firmly believed, is sufficient to encourage even a regenerate sinner, (for it is plain, regeneration is before the first act of faith, John i. 12, 13,) to trust in Christ. To supply this defect, we must first believe as truth what as yet is not true, and that without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason. And this belief, this persuasion, is to be the foundation of our trusting in Christ; so

entirely the foundation, that, without it, we cannot "with the least prudence" trust in him. And the weight, the whole weight, of our eternal salvation, is at bottom laid, not on the gospel, the written gospel, but on a supposed truth, we have no evidence of, from Scripture, sense, or reason.

O, my dear Theron! this is a precarious foundation to venture your precious, your immortal soul upon; and should it give way and break under you, it might let you fall down into eternal ruin. This, this is indeed, to use your Aspasio's beautiful similitude, "like placing the dome of a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip."

Meanwhile let me tell you, the inspired apostles verily believed that, in the written word, we have, not only full evidence of the truth of the gospel itself, (John xx. 31,) but also, the truth of the gospel being seen, sufficient encouragement to come to God through Christ, in full assurance of being accepted through him. (Heb. x. 19, 22.) And on this ground they preached the gospel to the world, inviting all to return to God through Jesus Christ, without ever giving the least intimation of any need of their being previously persuaded of some things as truths, which were nowhere plainly contained in the gospel.

Ther. Pray what is there contained in the gospel which may be sufficient to encourage a sinner to return to God through Christ, with full assurance of acceptance through him?

Paul. These three truths are set in the clearest and strongest light, in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ:

1. That the goodness of God, the supreme Governor of the world, is self-moving and infinite. It needs no external motive, no goodness in us, to draw it forth into exercise. Yea, it can surmount infinite ill desert, self-moved. This is demonstrated in God's giving his Son, of his own mere motion, to die for a world so ill-deserving, so infinitely ill-deserving, that no atonement appeared to him sufficient to secure the honor of his law and government, but the blood of his own Son. Let me believe with all my heart that God has done this deed, a deed infinitely superior to the creation of millions of such worlds as this, all which, with one word's speaking, Messiah could have created in a moment; I say, let me believe with all my heart that God, of his own mere motion, has given his Son, one equal to himself, to die for such a world as this, and at once I have the fullest conviction of his self-moving goodness and infinite grace. It stands in a light brighter than the sun at noon-day.

2. God can, consistently with the honor of himself, of his law, and government, and sacred authority, pardon and save those who, strictly speaking, are infinitely ill-deserving, through

Jesus Christ his Son. His honor is, in every point of light, effectually secured by the mediation and death of his Son. The dignity, the infinite dignity, of the Son of God, proves this to the enlightened soul. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is a visible demonstration of it; and God himself, in plain words, declares it to be true, that he can now be "just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus." Now, if the goodness of the divine nature is infinite and self-moving, and if he can, consistently with his own honor, pardon and save the infinitely ill-deserving through Jesus Christ his Son, the only question that remains is, who may, among all the sons of Adam, trust in this glorious Mediator, return home to God through him, and through his merits and atonement look to the free grace of God for pardon and eternal life? But,

3. It is most expressly declared, that "whosoever will, may come," and "he that cometh shall in nowise be cast out." Yea, orders are given that these glad tidings should be carried all round the world, "the gospel preached to every creature." And all, even the vilest and the worst, are to be, as it were, compelled to come in, "prayed and beseeched to be reconciled to God," "to repent and be converted," to return home to God through Jesus Christ; to God, who is as ready to be reconciled to the returning sinner, as the father of the prodigal is represented to be to his returning son.

Now when the sinner's eyes, in regeneration, are opened to behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, it will immediately appear to him the fittest and happiest thing in the world, to return home to God, and be forever devoted to him, if he may. And a clear sight and firm belief of these plain gospel truths gives him the fullest assurance that he may; that it is God's will he should; and that God stands ready to accept him through Jesus Christ, if he does.*

* Except my eyes are first opened to behold the glory of God, I cannot see the ground and reason of the law, nor heartily approve it as holy, just, and good. Unless the law appears good and glorious, I cannot see the wisdom of God in the death of his Son, nor cordially believe the gospel to be true. Till I see the gospel to be true, I am blind to the only door of hope. Merely a sight of the glory of God as a righteous lawgiver, and a sight of the glory of his holy law, can give no hope. The truth of the gospel is seen; I then behold, first, the love, the self-moving goodness of God in the gift of his Son; but not that he loves me in particular, and is reconciled to me. Secondly; I then see that Christ has secured the honor of the divine government; and that now God can be just, and yet justify the sinner that believeth in Jesus; but not that I am one for whom he died, with an absolute design to save. Thirdly; I then see, that any sinner may return to God through Christ; and see that those who do, will be accepted and saved; but not that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." In a word, I see the truth of what is already revealed in the gospel; but I do not see truths not revealed there. The Holy

Indeed, I readily grant, that unregenerate sinners do neither see the infinite amiableness of God, nor really believe the gospel to be true. The "vail is on their hearts." The gospel "is hid from them." They are "blind." And their blindness is a vicious, wicked blindness, arising from a heart void of love to God, and full of enmity against his law, and against the glorious gospel of his Son; as was proved in our former conversation; and in this benighted state, being followed with the fears of eternal misery, they must take some way for hope and comfort. Some go about to establish their own righteousness; and on that build their hopes for heaven. Others, finding no comfort in the way of duties, try to work up themselves to a belief that Christ died for them in particular, that God loves them, and will save them. And if by any means they come to feel a strong persuasion of this, it so delivers them from their fears, and so fills them with comfort and joy, that they do all they can to strengthen this persuasion; and to this end, apply a hundred texts of Scripture, perverting them from their plain and natural meaning; and are yet obliged at last to own, that they have no evidence on which to ground their belief, from Scripture, sense, or reason. Yea, that the thing they believe is not true, till it becomes true by their believing it to be true. However, their consciences being quieted by this belief, they can now go on, estranged from a God of infinite glory, blind to his infinite beauties. Nor do they believe that ever any did love God for his own infinite loveliness; although this is the very spirit of all the angels and saints in heaven, and of all good men upon earth. (Isai. vi. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18.)*

Spirit helps me to see the truths already revealed; but reveals no new truths. The things which I believe, were true before I believed them. If, after all, any pretend there is no difference between these two kinds of faith, I only say, if these two kinds of faith, like two roads which seem, and but seem, to lead the same way, should, in fact, lead to two different worlds, as far asunder as heaven and hell, it is proper to set up these monuments, to warn travellers; and the nearer they are alike, the more need poor travellers have to take heed they do not mistake. But if they do, if they will mistake after warning, their blood will be upon their own heads, and they will eternally remember that they knew what they believed was not revealed in Scripture. They believed without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason.

* To make the matter, if possible, still plainer, it may be thus stated: 1st. He that is encouraged to come to Christ from a consciousness of some good qualification in himself, secretly builds his hopes of acceptance with God on his own righteousness. 2d. He that is encouraged to come to Christ, from a belief that Christ died for him in particular, and that God is reconciled to him, builds his hopes of acceptance with God on a delusion. 3d. He that comes to Christ without a disposition to be reconciled to God, is only seeking after salvation from hell, and does not desire the salvation which the gospel offers. 4th. He that thinks he has a disposition to be reconciled to God, but never saw the glory of God, of his law, and government, he but deceives himself. 5th. He that is encouraged to come only by the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as revealed in the written

Ther. I see you are returned again to your darling topic, the doctrine of loving God for his own loveliness.

Paul. Yes; and this is the very vitals of vital piety. A sense of the beauty of the divine nature, and a firm belief of the truth of the gospel, lay the foundation for all the rest. "Repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" a life of communion with God and devotedness to him; joy in God, and rejoicing in Jesus Christ. And while the love of God, not a belief that God loves me in particular, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, but a clear and lively sense of the self-moving goodness and infinite grace of God, as manifested in the gift of his Son, and shining forth in the whole gospel way of life, as exhibited in the written word, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, attended with a full assurance that we are the children of God, resulting from a consciousness of a filial spirit towards God; now we know and believe the love that God hath to us. And, inspired with a sense of the divine glory, the beauty of God's law and government, the glory of the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ, the free and sovereign grace of God in calling us into the kingdom of his Son, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and habitually, and actually, through the course of our lives, present ourselves a living sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ; to be for him, entirely for him, and that forever. Nor do we feel any need to bring your kind of faith into the account.

You remember, my dear Theron, that parabolical picture of a true saint, of a real Christian, given by our blessed Savior, in Matt. xiii. 23, whose representations, if we do not believe, we do indeed make God a liar. He that received seed into the good ground is he, not that hath a new revelation of a new truth not contained in the gospel! but is he that heareth the word, and — what next? — not, is really persuaded in his heart that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine!" without any evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason;" but heareth the word, and understandeth it, so as in it to behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Which also — what? — complains that his graces are no more to be seen "than the stars at noon"? No. What then? Which also beareth fruit. How much? So little that no eye can see it!

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word, builds his hopes of acceptance on the truth. He that comes on this encouragement, with a hearty disposition to be forever reconciled to God, and devoted to him, and thirsting for grace forever to live to him, is a true convert. He that, after this, lives to God through all trials, proves his faith by his works, as Abraham did. (Gen. xxii. 12.)

or, at most, but just discern it, "as a glowworm in the night!" and that in so unsteady, uncertain a manner, that for his life he cannot tell whether there be any fruit or no; but rather the more he looks, the more "his doubts are increased"? No, no, far from this; and bringeth forth some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. Yes, my Theron, that is good ground indeed which yields a hundred bushels of grain, for one that was sown; or sixty, or even thirty. And thus, the grain of mustard seed becometh a great tree. And thus, the leaven spreads till the whole is leavened. And this is the idea, the grand and noble idea, our blessed Savior had of a true Christian! It is granted there is a great difference in the degrees of fruitfulness in true converts — some a hundred fold some sixty, some thirty. But those who bring forth no good fruit, whatever ravishing joys they may sometimes have had, are by our blessed Savior pictured by the similitude of stony ground — thorny ground.

Ther. But I have an unanswerable objection against this account of the nature of justifying faith; for, whereas in the Holy Scriptures it is represented to be an exceeding difficult thing to believe; according to you, there is no difficulty at all in it, when once the sinner, in your sense of things, is regenerate, and believes the gospel to be true with all his heart.

Paul. Right, my dear Theron. The difficulty is now over; for he is not obliged to believe "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." The way in which he is to return to God all lies open, plain before him. And it appears to him the fittest and happiest thing in the world, to return home to God, through Jesus Christ; and he does it with all his heart.*

Ther. Wherein, then, consists the difficulty of believing?

Paul. The difficulty in the way of embracing the gospel in a saving manner, according to the New Testament, arises

* *Return home to God.* — By this phrase, Paulinus means exactly the same with those words in Jer. iv. 1: "If thou wilt return, O, Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me." And in Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die! And in Acts iii. 19: "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." From being enemies, repent, and turn, and "be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. v. 20.) It is worthy to be observed that, according to St. Peter, repentance is before forgiveness. "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And this is the doctrine God has taught in all ages of the world. By Moses, (Lev. xxvi. 40;) by David, (Ps. xxxii. 5;) by Isaiah, (Isa. lv. 7;) by John Baptist, (Mark i. 4;) by Christ, (Matt. v. 4; Luke xiii. 3;) by all the apostles on the day of Pentecost, (Acts ii. 37—39,) and, indeed, all over the Scripture. But there is nothing of the nature of repentance before forgiveness, in Theron's scheme. Yea, his repentance professedly arises wholly from a belief that his sins are forgiven; so that he is forgiven before he begins to repent.

from a worldly spirit, a self-righteous spirit, and being dead in sin.

1. From a worldly spirit. Men are generally so attached to worldly things, riches, honor, and pleasure, that, although they might be glad to know they should go to heaven when they die, yet they have no heart to become the disciples of Christ; to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him; and take God for the alone portion of their souls. Therefore, when they are invited to come to this feast, (and a feast indeed it is to a regenerate sinner, whose eyes are opened to see things as they are,) they desire to be "excused." And they "make light of it, and go their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise."

2. From a self-righteous spirit, (Rom. ix. 31—33;) for if a sinner is so terrified with the fears of eternal damnation, that he can take no comfort in worldly enjoyments; and so is quite prepared to hear Aspasio urge him to believe that God loves him, and Christ died for him; yet there now remains the chief difficulty in the way of true faith, unremoved, namely, to yield the point, that the law not only does in fact require sinless perfection, on pain of eternal damnation, and that he is under the curse of this law, but that this law is holy, just, and good; and so he justly condemned, and in fact, in the hands, and at the disposal of a sovereign God. This, this, a proud, self-righteous spirit is diametrically opposite unto; and to be brought to this, is killing work. "The commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

3. From being spiritually dead; for when the law has thoroughly done its work, and the sinner sees and feels the truth, that he is dead in sin, justly condemned, absolutely helpless and undone in himself, in the hands of a sovereign God, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; there now needs the same mighty power whereby Christ was raised from the dead, to quicken this dead sinner. And it must wholly proceed from the mere free sovereign grace of God. (Eph. i. 19, 20, compared with Eph. ii. 1, 8.) That regeneration does thus precede the first act of faith, is plain from John i. 12, 13, where, concerning all true believers, it is said, "which were born," that is, antecedent to the first act of faith; "which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (See also John iii. 3, 5.)

But these three difficulties being removed, and sinners made "willing in the day of his power," all is easy. Sinners now come flying to Christ, as naturally "as doves to their windows." For God appears to be infinitely glorious, and the gospel to be divinely true.

And here, by the way, my dear Theron, it is worthy of your diligent attention, that it is a common thing, in the New Testament, to promise salvation to those who believe the truth of the gospel with all their hearts, and to speak of such as true saints; because where this is, every thing else will follow of course. In this view, you may at your leisure read the following Scriptures: Matt. xvi. 16, 17. Mark xvi. 15, 16. John vi. 68, 69; xvii. 3, 8; xx. 30, 31. Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 9. 1 Cor. xii. 3. 1 John iv. 15; v. 1, 5. Some of which are sadly perverted by some writers; particularly Rom. x. 9.

Ther. The clock strikes nine; it is time for me to retire. However, before I go, pray point out, in brief, the chief differences between what you call true faith and the faith I have been pleading for, that I may have them to consider at my leisure; for I design more thoroughly to look into this matter than ever yet I have done.

Paul. Among the many differences which might be mentioned, I will only point these twelve.

1. Regeneration is necessarily previous to the first act of true faith. But your faith may exist in an unregenerate heart.

2. True faith supposes the law and gospel are rightly understood and beheld in their glory: the law approved with all the heart, as holy, just, and good; the gospel believed, and complied with, with all the heart. But your faith is consistent with a reigning enmity against both law and gospel.

3. True faith is a holy act; but yours has nothing of the nature of holiness in it; arises from no higher principle than self-love.

4. In true faith, nothing is believed but what is plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures. But in your faith, the main things believed are nowhere contained in the Bible. "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine."

5. In true faith, the things believed were as true before they were believed as after; being all contained in the Scriptures of truth. But in your faith, the things believed were not true before they were believed; not being contained in the Bible.

6. True faith is founded wholly on that revelation which is made in the written word. But your faith, having no support from Scripture, sense, or reason, is founded wholly in a heated imagination; or, which is no better, on a new revelation, not contained in the written word; that is, one is founded on good evidence, the other not.

7. The great difficulty in the way of true faith arises from the wickedness of the heart; but the great difficulty in the way of your faith is, that there is no evidence of the truth of the thing believed, from Scripture, sense, or reason; but rather, a man is obliged to go contrary to them all.

8. True faith is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, in regeneration, imparting divine life to the dead soul, opening the eyes to behold divine truths in their glory and reality; in consequence of which, the gospel is understood, believed, and embraced with all the heart. But your faith is wrought by your being made, by some means or other, to believe some things as true that are not revealed in Scripture.

9. In true faith, the way of salvation, by free grace through Jesus Christ, being understood and believed, is heartily approved of, and acquiesced in, as being glorious for God and safe for the sinner; and our entire dependence for acceptance with God is on the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as exhibited in the written word. Whereas, your faith does not properly consist in dependence, but in confidence; not in looking to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, that you may be pardoned, sanctified, and saved; not in flying for refuge, and laying hold on this hope set before you; but in being confident that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine;" in being "readily persuaded in my heart that Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him," without any evidence "from Scripture, sense or reason." *

10. True faith is always attended with love to God, arising from a sense of his own infinite amiableness, as its inseparable concomitant. Your faith is sometimes followed with a seeming love to God, arising merely from believing that he loves you.

11. But the most remarkable difference of all is, that true faith actually unites the man to Jesus Christ, as the "branch is united to the vine." In consequence of which, every true believer actually receives the spirit of Christ to dwell in him.†

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* I grant, that writers on that side of the question speak much of trusting in Christ, and resting upon him, etc. Yet, according to them, previous to this trust, and that which encourages to it, is a belief that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." And so I believe that my sins are pardoned before I begin to trust in Christ. I do not come to Christ, but rather stand off and keep at a distance, till I see he is mine, and can call God my God. So that, strictly speaking, I am justified, and know that I am justified, before I dare come to Christ, and trust in him. Thus the matter is stated, in II. p. 312.

† Although it is plain from Scripture, that regeneration is before the first act of saving faith, (John i. 12, 13,) and that faith is wrought by the influences of

(Rom. viii. 9. Eph. i. 13. Gal. iii. 2, 14. 1 John iv. 13; ii. 27. Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.) In consequence of this, a certain foundation is laid, to bring forth fruit unto God, (Rom. vii. 4,) in every instance. (Matt. xiii. 23.) And "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "If he falleth, he riseth up again." "Every branch that beareth fruit, God purgeth it, and so it bringeth forth more fruit." Whence, near or quite all the saints we read of in Scripture, usually speak the language of assurance, as being conscious to this divine habitual change wrought in them by God's Holy Spirit. But thus it is not with your kind of faith; nor is assurance this way to be obtained on your scheme.

12. As a natural consequence of the whole, the several systems of experimental religion, resulting from these two kinds of faith, however in appearance they may be alike, yet in reality are essentially different throughout. While the true believer is striving to grow in grace, the false pretender is striving to maintain his delusion.

Ther. I thank you, sir, for present instructions: and with your leave I will return to-morrow evening; as I want to hear your thoughts on one subject more.

Paul. The evening shall be at your service, God willing.

So ended the second conversation, and I retired again to my closet; with what views of my spiritual state, you may easily guess. O my dear Aspasio! What! Are we all wrong? Or have I misunderstood your scheme? I hope, I wish, no poor sinner on earth was ever so deluded as I have been. The Lord have mercy on me! O my dear Aspasio, that you had been present, and heard all that passed! But, alas, the wide ocean keeps us three thousand miles apart! However, with you, even now with you, is the distressed heart of

Your disconsolate

THERON.

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the Holy Spirit, (Eph. i. 19,) yet it is equally plain, that the gift of the Holy Spirit, to dwell in us, as an abiding principle of divine life, is after we are united to Christ by faith. (Eph. i. 13. Gal. iii. 14.) After union to Christ, we have a covenant right to the Holy Spirit, (Gal. iii. 29;) may have divine grace at any time, for asking. (Luke xi. 13.) But before union with Christ, we have no right; God is at absolute liberty; we lie at his sovereign mercy. (Rom. ix. 15, 18.) And accordingly, regenerating grace is the effect of his sovereign good pleasure. (Matt. xi. 25, 26.) No promises of saving grace are made to the prayers or doings of sinners out of Christ. (Gal. iii. 10. 2 Cor. i. 20. John iii. 18, 36.)

DIALOGUE III.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, *Dec.* 13, 1758.

ACCORDING to appointment, I made my third visit. The subject proposed was the doctrine of Assurance. We soon entered upon it; and this is the sum of what passed.

Ther. May the people of God, in this life, attain to a certain assurance, that they are in a state of favor with God, and entitled to eternal glory?

Paul. As there is a specific difference between true grace and all counterfeits; as true grace in the heart is naturally discernible, like all our other inward biases; as the saints in Scripture usually speak the language of assurance; as saints in all ages are exhorted to seek assurance, (2 Pet. i. 10,) and as there are many rules laid down in Scripture to determine in this case, and many promises made for the encouragement of saints, the designed advantage of which cannot be enjoyed without assurance; so, for these and other reasons, I believe that assurance is attainable in this life, in all ordinary cases at least.

Ther. How, and by what means, may the children of God attain assurance?

Paul. Sanctification, taking the word in a large and comprehensive sense, is the evidence, the only Scripture evidence, of a good estate.

Ther. What do you mean by sanctification, in this large and comprehensive sense?

Paul. It is usual for divines to distinguish between regeneration and conversion; between first conversion and progressive sanctification; between divine views and holy affections; between grace in the heart and an holy life and conversation; but I mean to comprehend all under one general name. You may call it the image of God, or holiness of heart and life, or a real conformity to the divine law, and a genuine compliance with the gospel of Christ. I have already let you see what I apprehend to be the nature of law and gospel, of love to God, and faith in Christ. When I say this is the only evidence, I mean that this is the only thing wherein saints and sinners in every instance differ. One has the image of God, the other has not. Or, to express myself in the language of inspiration, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;" and "hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a

liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him."

Ther. What is the best method a true saint can take, to maintain a constant assurance of his good estate?

Paul. To live in the exercise of all Christian graces in his own heart every day, and to be constantly influenced and governed by them in all his external conduct in the world; "growing in grace," and "pressing forward to perfection."

Ther. But is it possible that all true saints should live so?

Paul. Why not? for they are all delivered from the power of sin, (Rom. vi. 2, 14,) are married to Christ, in whom all fulness dwells, (Rom. vii. 4,) have already every principle of grace in their hearts, (John i. 15,) and the Spirit of God actually dwelling in them, (Rom. viii. 9,) and constantly influencing them to such a degree, that they do not, they even cannot, feel and live as others do, (1 John iii. 9;)* yea, actually carrying on the work of sanctification, (John xv. 2;) the God of all grace ready, meanwhile, to grant all further needful help, as ready as ever a kind parent was to give bread to a hungry child. (Matt. vii. 7, 11.) So that they are completely furnished to live daily in the exercise of every grace. (Eph. ii. 10.) Yea, this is expected of them, as they would act up to their proper character. (Eph iv. 1.) Yea, I will venture to add, having so good an authority as the Son of God, that, though there are different degrees of grace and fruitfulness among true saints,

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* 1 John iii. 9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God: he doth not, and he cannot, at any time, for his seed always remaineth in him; so that these words teach us, that there is at all times a real difference between a saint and a sinner.

It is true, there is no particular bias or inclination, whether natural or gracious, in the heart of man, but may be counteracted. But to counteract the habitual bias of the heart, is quite different from acting agreeably to the habitual bias of the heart. The saint counteracts the habitual bias of his heart when he sins. The sinner acts agreeable to the habitual bias of his whole heart when he sins. So a saint never sins with all his heart, as the wicked man does. He cannot, because his seed remains in him; because he is born of God. The Spirit lusteth against the flesh; so that he cannot. (Gal. v. 17.)

Therefore, good men, when they fall, are restless till they come to repentance, as was the case with David. (Ps. xxxii. 3—5.) For they are out of their element; "all is vanity and vexation of spirit," as was the case with Solomon. As, when Haman led Mordecai through the street of Shushan on the king's horse, dressed in the royal apparel, and proclaimed his honors in the ears of the people, he acted exceeding contrary to the habitual bias of his heart. (Esth. vi.) So did Peter, when he denied his Master; and therefore, at one look of Christ, he went out and wept bitterly. So that these instances, though often alleged, are not to the purpose of stony-ground hearers; for they have no root in themselves. They "receive the word with joy, endure for a while, and fall away." See Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections, p. 274, 277

yet it is their common character to bring forth fruit, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. (Matt. viii. 23.) So that it seems more difficult to reconcile it with Scripture that a true saint (there being no extraordinary bodily disease, as the hypochondria, etc., nor other extraordinary circumstances that may account for it) should live along in the dark, full of doubts and fears about his state, from year to year; I say, more difficult to reconcile this with Scripture, than it is to prove that they may live so as to make their calling and election sure, according to that exhortation in 2 Pet. i. 5, 11.

Ther. But I have known some, esteemed true converts, who, after their conversion, have lain dead, without any sensible divine influence, for months together.

Paul. Why did you not add, and years together? For once I knew of one, counted an eminent Christian, who declared he lay dead twelve years, without one act of grace all that time. But what good do such conversions do? If men are as much under the power of spiritual death after their conversions as before, what benefit is there in being converted? and what becomes of all those Scriptures which declare, "He shall save his people from their sins." "That we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives." "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And pray take notice, my dear Theron, that, as God gave the law, written on tables of stone, to Israel, to all "Israel according to the flesh," which covenant they did break, (Heb. viii. 9,) so he has expressly promised to all the spiritual Israel, that is, to all true believers, (Gal. iii. 29,) that he will write his law in their hearts, that is, give them an inward temper of mind answerable to his written law. (Heb. viii. 10.) A hypocrite may go to God, and say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine," and be ravished with his own delusion; but God doth, in fact, write his law in the heart of every true believer. This is God's mark, put upon all that are of his flock; whereby his sheep are distinguished from the rest of the world.

Ther. But cannot a man, who is very uncertain of his sanctification, be sure of eternal life some other way?

Paul. Our Savior, having described the Christian temper and life in his Sermon on the Mount, concludes with the strong-

est assurances that such, and such only, as are truly sanctified, shall be finally saved. If we are such, our house is built upon a rock; if not, our house is built upon the sand. Now, my dear Theron, we hope to go to heaven when we die. So do many, who will be finally disappointed. How shall you and I know that our foundation is good? Who can tell us? Surely, none better than he who is to be our judge. Could we ask our blessed Savior, Lord, how shall we know? what would he say? Thanks be to God, we know what he would say, as surely as though he should answer us with an audible voice from heaven. For he is now of the same mind as when he dwelt on earth. What he then taught is left on record, plain for all to read, that none might mistake in a point of such infinite importance.

Take your Bible, my dear Theron; read our Savior's Sermon on the Mount; and there you will see the character of a true Christian, drawn by an infallible hand, and find a test by which you may safely try your state. The true Christian is humble, penitent, meek, longing after holiness, merciful, pure in heart, a peacemaker, willing to part with all for Christ, and to go through the greatest sufferings in his cause. Like salt, he is full of life and spirit. Like light, by his knowledge and example he enlightens all around him, and is an honor to his Master; lives by a stricter rule than any hypocrite; does not justify nor indulge the least grudge against his neighbor, or the first stirrings of any corruption in his heart; loves not only his friends but his enemies, even his worst enemies; gives alms, and prays, as in the sight of God; is chiefly concerned for the honor of God, and kingdom and interest of Christ in the world; chooses God for his portion, lays up his treasure in heaven, and means, with an honest heart, with a single eye, only to be God's servant; and, trusting his kind providence for temporal supplies, he makes it his chief business to be truly religious: not of a carping, captious, censorious disposition; but chiefly attentive to, and mostly concerned to amend, his own faults. He prays, and his prayers are answered; and, in imitation of the divine goodness, he is kind to all around him, doing as he would be done by. At his conversion, he enters in at this strait gate of strict piety; and through the course of his life he travels in this narrow way of holiness, almost alone, few suited with that road, many walking in broader ways. Nor will he be diverted from these sentiments and ways by any preachers or writers, whatever appearances of holiness and devotion they may put on.

Ther. But do you really and verily believe that none will at last be admitted into heaven but those who are of this character?

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, read our Savior's answer to your question, and believe it. Believe that he means as he says.

Ther. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven."

Paul. Observe, "that doth," not that did some years ago, but that doth, through the course of his life. Forgive this interruption. Pray read on.

Ther. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

Paul. You see they are in confident expectation of eternal life. But what is their doom?

Ther. "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Paul. Observe, my dear Theron, our Savior does not say, every one who firmly believeth that he shall be saved, however unconscious of sanctifying operations in his own breast, shall, as sure as God is true, be forever happy. No: but just the reverse. He says that, however confident men be of salvation, yet if they do not the things contained in his sermon, their hopes shall infallibly be disappointed. Now say, my dear Theron, do you believe this doctrine, taught by our blessed Savior?

Ther. I must own, I have not been wont to view things just in this light. "I used to think, I need not trouble myself to find out a multitude of marks and signs of true grace, if I could find a few good ones. Particularly, I thought I might know I was passed from death to life, if I loved the brethren." M.

Paul. Your few good ones are all counterfeits, if alone, separate from other good ones. For the true saint receives every grace from Christ. (John i. 16.) Nor did Christ mean to single out a few in his sermon, but to give a brief summary of the whole Christian life. And he that heareth these sayings of

mine, and doth them, not, doth a few of them, but doth them one and all. Read through the first epistle of John, and you will see this sentiment confirmed. Where there is one grace, there is all. If there is not all, there is none.*

Ther. But, sir, suffer me to tell you, that "this method of seeking peace and assurance, I fear, will perplex the simple-minded; and cherish, rather than suppress, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the signs be what you please, a love of the brethren or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart or an alteration of life, these good qualifications are sometimes, like the stars at noon-day, not easily, if at all, discernible; or else they are like a glowworm in the night, glimmering rather than shining; consequently, will yield at the best but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence. If in such a manner we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptations, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture, how will it keep its standing? How retain its being? It will fare like a tottering wall before a tempest; or be as the rush without mire, and the flag without water. (Job viii. 11.)

"Instead therefore of poring on our own hearts, to discover, by inherent qualities, our interest in Christ, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord; assert and maintain my title on this unalterable ground: Pardon is mine, I would say, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine. Why? Because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast. Rather, because God hath spoken in his holiness; because all these precious privileges are consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel, with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God." H.

Paul. But did you not use to think, that faith was productive of good works? Yea, did not your Aspasio teach you this doctrine?

Ther. I must confess he did. This was once the language of my Aspasio to me, while I was yet an unbeliever. To give me an exalted idea of faith, thus he taught me: "Faith will make every power of our souls spring forward to glorify our

* However, on the Arminian and Antinomian schemes of religion, in which nothing is truly harmonious and consistent, what they call graces, may, some particulars of them, be found alone; yet on St. Paul's scheme this can never happen; for every grace natively results from those divine views which lay the foundation of any one grace. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, as shining forth in the law and in the gospel, we are changed into the same image, that is, into a real conformity to the law, and a genuine compliance with the gospel, comprising all the branches of religion. See Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections, p. 249, 261.

heavenly Father; glorify him by every instance of obedience, fidelity, and zeal. It makes all the powers of our souls like the chariots of Aminadab, ready, expedite, and active in duty. This is the love of God, that we walk after his commandments. This is the natural fruit; this the certain evidence of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorable Being. It buildeth up the fair fabric of universal godliness." H. It "will diffuse itself through every intellectual faculty, and extend to every species of duty, till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behavior regulated by the law of the blessed God." It "will induce us to present all the members of our bodies, and all the faculties of our souls, as a living sacrifice to the honor of God, to be employed in his service and resigned to his will." To "be as pilgrims below, and have our conversation above. Such, my dear Theron," said he to me, "will be the effects of faith. Nothing is more certain than that faith is a vital, an operative, a victorious principle. When the first converts believed, the change of their behavior was so remarkable, the holiness of their lives so exemplary, that they won the favor and commanded the respect of all the people. (Acts ii. 47.) In short, it is as impossible for the sun to be in his meridian sphere and not to dissipate darkness, or diffuse light, as for faith to exist in the soul, and not exalt the temper and meliorate the conduct." All which, besides proving it by many texts of Scripture, he illustrated at large, in the example of St. Paul and Abraham, and concluded with assuring me, that faith "will give life to every religious duty;" and make us "abound in the work of the Lord." Yea, at another time he taught me, "that faith, even when weak, is productive of good works." Which are "the proof," and do "undeniably attest its sincerity." They are "the grand characteristic, which distinguishes the sterling from the counterfeit. They will distinguish the true believer from the hypocritical professor, even at the great tribunal." And at another time, I remember my Aspasio said, "Do we love our enemies; bless them that curse us; do good to them that hate us; pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us? Without this loving and lovely disposition, we abide, says the apostle, in death; are destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life."

Paul. "No title to eternal life!" How dare you then go to God and say, "pardon is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine!"

Ther. This is that very faith which my Aspasio taught me to exercise, and which he assured me, would be "as a torch in a sheaf," in kindling every grace into a sudden flame.

Paul. But why then does not every grace flame out? Why is not your heart like the chariots of Aminadab? and your title to heaven clear, "from a consciousness of sanctifying operations in your own breast?" If your faith is "a vital, an operative, a victorious principle," why cannot you obtain a full assurance from that "grand characteristic which distinguishes the sterling from the counterfeit," in this world; and which "will distinguish the true believer from the hypocritical professor, even at the great tribunal;" and without which you are, in fact, "destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life?"

Ther. Once I had this evidence, as I thought, clear in my favor; but, by experience, I found at length, that no steady, lasting assurance, could be had this way. For my graces were mostly "as the stars at noon, quite invisible; or at best, as a glowworm in the night," but just to be seen. So that the "little assurance" I had, was very unsteady. Yea, looking for marks of grace, I found "rather increased my doubts;" as I could not but discern more evidences against me than for me. Therefore I gave up this way, as tending to perpetual uncertainty. And as a more direct way to assurance and peace, I learnt to live by faith; to go to God, and say, "pardon is mine," etc.

Paul. And all, my dear Theron, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." Yea, in direct opposition to your own Aspasio, who affirms, that faith is "a vital, operative, victorious principle." Pray, how do you know that your faith is sterling, and not counterfeit? Be quite impartial, and say, is it not to be feared that your faith is what St. James calls a dead faith?

Ther. But the time once was when I was full of light, love, and joy.

Paul. Yes. Like a "torch in a sheaf," all in a flame of love, to think your sins were pardoned. But you see that this sort of love, like the Israelites' joy at the side of the Red Sea, does not last long; but, like the stony ground, it endures for a while, and then comes to nothing. And your graces are now no more to be seen than "the stars at noon." And you must give up your assurance, or take another course to support it, and another course, indeed, you take, to live by faith; "without any evidence," as Mr. Marshal owns, whose book your Aspasio values next to the Bible, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." And is this that glorious faith your Aspasio once so highly extolled! Is all come to this at last!

Ther. Yes. And did not Abraham thus live by faith, who "against hope believed in hope?" And was not this the way of saints in general under the Old Testament? When "they walked in darkness and saw no light, they trusted in the Lord, and stayed themselves on their God." And was not this the way of saints in the apostolic age? "They walked by faith, and not by sight." David checked himself for doubting: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" And Asaph looked upon it as his sin: "I said, this is my infirmity." And Christ often upbraided his disciples for their unbelief. And St. Paul charges the Hebrew converts not to "cast away their confidence."

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, take your Bible, and read the several texts you refer to; read what goes before, and what follows after; and you may easily see, not one of them is to your purpose. God had promised to give Abraham a son, although his wife was not only barren, but also, by reason of age, past child-bearing; and, notwithstanding the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment, Abraham believed the divine promise. God had, by the mouth of Samuel, promised to give David the kingdom of Israel; but he was banished from his country, and from God's sanctuary; his enemies taunted; yea, and his life was in continual danger; so that he was ready sometimes to say, "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul." But then again he checked himself for giving way to such unreasonable discouragement, after the express promise of God to him: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul!" However, through all the psalm he appears conscious to the exercise of grace in his heart, and discovers not the least doubt of the goodness of his state. (See Ps. xlii.) So the captives in Babylon had an express promise, that after seventy years they should return to Zion. But such an event, situate as they were, seemed incredible. Every thing looked dark. They had no light. They saw no way for their return. But God had promised it; and therefore they, (who feared the Lord and obeyed his voice, that is, who were "conscious of sanctifying operations in their own breasts,") for their encouragement, are exhorted to cast their burden upon their God, and put an implicit faith in his wisdom, power, and veracity; and trust in him to accomplish his word. (Read from Isa. xlix. 13, to Isa. l. 10.) So Asaph knew he was a sincere, godly man; as is evident from the seventy-third psalm, throughout. But he was so overwhelmed with a view of the calamitous state of God's church and people, (see Ps. lxxii. 20, and read the eleven psalms following, entitled Psalms of Asaph,) that some-

times, (like those in Isa. xlix. 14,) he was ready to sink under discouragement, as though God had quite cast off his church and people forever. For which he checketh himself, and endeavors to raise his hopes, from a remembrance of God's wonderful works to Israel of old, in bringing them out of Egypt. (Ps. lxxvii.) So the Christian Hebrews knew the sincerity of their hearts, and the goodness of their state, by the fruits of holiness. (Heb. vi. 9—11.) And the confidence, that St. Paul exhorts them to hold fast, was their confidence of the truth of Christianity; for the profession of which they had already suffered much and were likely to suffer more; and yet, if they drew back and renounced Christianity, it would cost them their souls. (Heb. x. 23, 39.) And though it is true our Savior upbraided his disciples for not believing he was risen from the dead, of which they had sufficient evidence, etc., yet neither they, nor any other person, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, were ever blamed for doubting their title to eternal life, while their evidences were not clear.

Yea, our Savior was so far from encouraging his followers to this blind faith, this bold presumption, that his whole Sermon on the Mount is directly levelled against it. None are pronounced blessed, but those who are endowed with holy and divine qualifications of heart, and lead answerable lives; and though men were endowed with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and prophesied in Christ's name, and in his name cast out devils, and did many wonderful works, and made a great profession, and had high confidence, crying Lord, Lord; as our Savior foresaw many would; yet if they were not under the real government of that divine temper described in that sermon throughout, our Savior affirms, that at the day of judgment he would bid them depart. (Matt. vii. 21, 27.) To go on, therefore, after all this, confident we shall have eternal life, though unconscious of sanctifying operations in our own breasts, is, forgive me, Theron, is, I say, little better than downright infidelity. Yea, did we believe our Savior to be an impostor, we might with less difficulty expect to get to heaven in such a way; for as sure as he was a messenger sent from God, so sure shall we find the doctrine contained in his Sermon on the Mount verified at that great day when he shall come to judge the world. Wherefore, be not deceived, O my Theron! "God will not be mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

To refer to those words of St. Paul. "We walk by faith, and not by sight," as you do, and to imagine that St. Paul and the primitive Christians lived at such a low, blind, presumptuous

rate, casts infinite reproach upon Christianity. For they all, with unveiled faces, "beheld, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and were changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And divine and eternal things all lay open, as it were, to the apostle's view. He looked at them; he saw them; he believed them. A sense of their infinite importance penetrated his heart. He was clean carried above all the goods and ills of this present world; and like the sun in the firmament, he kept on a steady course, till he had finished his race, and obtained a crown of righteousness. And thus "he lived by faith." Yea, it was an avowed principle, in the apostolic age, to judge of the goodness of their state by the holiness of their hearts and lives. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." "Let no man deceive you." "He that committeth sin is of the devil." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." This was the apostolic criterion; and therefore, if any pretended to conversion, if any pretended to be acquainted with Christ, who lived not according to our Savior's instructions, particularly in his Sermon on the Mount, this was his doom; he was branded for a liar. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Ther. I grant, the saints in Scripture usually speak the language of assurance; but I always thought "we had no cause to judge that this assurance was grounded on the certainty of their own good qualifications." M.

Paul. Was not Abraham certain of his sincerity when, out of love and obedience to God, he left his father's house and native country, and, at one word speaking, felt a heart prepared to offer up his beloved Isaac? Was not Moses certain of his sincerity when, out of love to the cause of God, he despised all the treasures of Egypt; and afterwards felt he had rather die, had rather have his name blotted out of the book of the living, than that God should not effectually take care of the honor of his own great name? Was not Job certain of his sincerity when with such calmness he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord"? Yea, did not he constantly assert his sincerity through all his trials? "O, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day," says David. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee," says Asaph. "I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart," says Hezekiah, looking death in the face. "Thou knowest

that I love thee," says Peter. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world," says Paul. But why do I mention particulars? for this, even this, is the way in which all scriptural saints attained assurance. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." And had you lived in the apostolic age, O my Theron, I doubt not all good people would have been ready, on hearing such talk as you have been too much carried away with, to cry out, "But know, thou vain man, that faith without works is dead."

Ther. "If in such a manner we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of temptation, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture, how will it keep its standing? how retain its being? It will fare like a tottering wall before the tempest; or be 'as the rush without mire, and the flag without water.'" H.

Paul. It is true, when the storm arises, the house that is built upon the sand will be "like a tottering wall before the tempest:" and "as the rush without mire, and the flag without water," so the hypocrite's hope shall perish. But in true saints, their faith is "a victorious principle." "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Nor shall any ever be admitted to "eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, but he that overcometh." This is the message which Christ, since his exaltation in heaven, has sent to his church on earth. And therefore, "blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Ther. But are there not some who are but babes in Christ?

Paul. Yes. And "as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby;" and as they grow up "unto a perfect man," their assurance increases in exact proportion. (2 Pet. i. 5, 10.)

Ther. This doctrine of yours, "I fear," will wound weak Christians, and "perplex the simple-minded."

Paul. This doctrine, so plainly taught by Jesus Christ, and by all his apostles, were it once thoroughly understood and firmly believed, would not only "wound" and "perplex" presumptuous hypocrites, but even slay its thousands, yea, its ten thousands; while the righteous would flourish like the green bay-tree, nourished up by such sound and good doctrine. For never did assurance, true and genuine assurance, so abound among professors as in the apostolic age, when this was the doctrine universally in vogue. And then the holy lives of their

converts were so "exemplary, that they won the favor, and commanded the respect, of all the people;" and Christianity, thus adorned by the constant behavior of its professors, gained ground every where, in spite of all the efforts of earth and hell. Whereas, in the days of Luther, in the days of Cromwell, and in our day, when your kind of assurance has been so much in vogue, the lives of many professors have been such as to bring reproach upon Christianity in the sight of the world. It was this that prejudiced the Papists against the reformation in Luther's time. It was this that prejudiced England against experimental religion in Cromwell's time. And it is this, it is this, O my Theron, that has brought vital piety into such general contempt in New England, in these late years. Our opposers cried, "Let us wait, and see how these converts will turn out a few years hence." They waited; and are confirmed in their infidelity. And thousands seem to be gone off to the Arminian scheme, or worse. Could I speak, O my Theron, with a voice like that of the archangel when he shall wake up all the sleeping dead, I would sound an alarm to all God's people through the Christian world, warn them against this delusion, and invite them to return back to the old apostolic doctrine.

Ther. But, dear sir, it is not possible for me to maintain assurance in this way. To suppose that my inherent graces, which are so difficult to be discerned at best, and so unsteady and precarious, are a proper foundation on which to build a fixed assurance, is a doctrine quite romantic. Yea, you may as well "place the dome of a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip." But on the other hand, by the witness of the Spirit, in contradistinction from inherent graces, a firm and unshaken assurance of our eternal salvation may be obtained.

Paul. A firm and solid rock is this fouudation; as he declares, who is the Son of God and our final Judge. No, say you, it is rather like "the stalk of a tulip"! On what evidence then will you venture your immortal soul for a whole eternity? On the witness of the Spirit? But, O my dear Theron, what good will this witness of the Spirit do you, when you come to die? When the storm rises, when the rain descends, the flood comes, and the wind beats upon your house, it will fall, "like a tottering wall before the tempest," if not founded on that very rock pointed out by our blessed Savior. Ten thousand witnesses, from ten thousand spirits, will stand you in no stead; for, as true as that Jesus was the Messiah, the man that heareth his sayings, and doeth them not, shall at last hear that dreadful word, Depart, depart, I know you not; I know you not, ye workers of iniquity. Then you will find that "without holi-

ness no man shall see the Lord." And then you will see that saying, now to you so incredible, made the test of admission into heaven, "No man can be Christ's disciple unless he love him more than father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands; yea, more than his own life." You may come to the door and knock, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to me; and tell him you firmly believed, in your heart, you should have eternal life; but if you are found a worker of iniquity, he will bid you depart. You may cry for mercy, but your cries will be forever in vain. That spirit, O my Theron, which would make you believe your state to be good, when according to Scripture it is bad, is not the Holy Spirit by which the Scriptures were inspired; nor is its testimony to be credited.

Ther. But if I must try the witness of the Spirit by the sincerity of my graces, the testimony of the Spirit will stand me in no stead. M.

Paul. If you trust to the testimony of the Spirit, without any regard to the sincerity of your graces, you have nothing but a spirit, a naked spirit, to depend upon; and if your spirit should prove to be Satan transformed into an angel of light, you are deluded; your soul is lost, forever lost.

Ther. But if we must first know by our inherent graces that we are the children of God, this would render the witness of the Spirit needless.

Paul. Unless we first know that we have these inherent graces, we can never be assured of our good estate, according to our Savior's Sermon on the Mount. Pray mind this, my dear Theron.

Ther. Then you deny the immediate witness of the Spirit, I suppose.

Paul. This immediate witness of the Spirit, which you plead for, is certainly contrary to Scripture; for it will tell a man his state is good, when, according to God's word, it is bad. And which is directly to the case in hand, it leads men to build their assurance, not on that rock our Savior points out as the only safe foundation, but on something entirely different; and, I am sorry to say it, tempts men to compare what our Savior calls a rock, to the stalk of a tulip. This spirit, therefore, being contrary to Scripture, is not the Spirit of God, but the spirit of delusion.

Ther. What then can the witness of the Spirit be?

Paul. The design of a witness is, to prove a point, to make it evident and certain; that we may believe it without the least doubt; and the proof must be legal proof, or it will not pass in law. Now, the point to be proved, is, that I am a child

of God, a true disciple of Christ; and so entitled to eternal life. For none but the children of God and true disciples of Christ, are entitled to heaven, according to the word of God; which is the only rule whereby all are finally to be judged. But Christ affirms, that no man can be his disciple, unless he love him more than father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands, yea, more than his own life. And assures us, in the most plain and express manner, that all who expect to go to heaven, not having such hearts and lives as he describes in his Sermon, shall certainly be disappointed. If, therefore, the Spirit of God means to make it evident to me, that I am a child of God, a disciple Christ, and so an heir of heaven, it will be, it must be, by a proof that will stand in law, a proof the Bible allows to be good. Otherwise, no credit is to be given to it, unless we will set aside this infallible law-book, by which all the Christian world is to be judged. If the proof will not pass with our final Judge, it ought not to pass with us now. But no proof will pass with our final Judge, but what quadrates with the forementioned declarations of our Savior; for he will not recede from his own words. Therefore, there is but this one way to prove to my conscience that I am a child of God, a disciple of Christ, and so an heir of glory; there is but one thing that can possibly convince me, namely, for the Spirit of God to give me such a heart as the children of God and true disciples of Christ have, according to the plain declarations of the gospel. By this I may know; and by nothing short of this. If this evidence is doubtful, no other can, no other should, satisfy me. If this is plain, no other is necessary in order to a full assurance. Therefore, then, the Spirit of God witnesseth with my spirit that I am a child of God, when by a large communication of divine grace this is made plain beyond all doubt. I feel the heart of a child towards God; a heart full of love, reverence, trust, obedience; a heart to go to him as a child to a father; or, in other words, the spirit of adoption, whereby I cry, "Abba, Father." And by this I know I am a child of God. And if a child, then an heir, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. (Rom. viii. 16, 17, compared with verse 1, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14.) All true believers had this seal of the Spirit in the apostolic age, (Eph. i. 13;) and for aught that you or I know, all true believers have had it in all succeeding ages ever since. It is certain they have in some degree; and it is certain, no full assurance can be had that is genuine and good, unless they have it in such a degree as to be plain beyond all dispute.

Ther. I used to think the Spirit helped us immediately, not by the evidences of internal graces, but immediately, without

any medium, without any evidence, to see our interest in the love of God, as held forth in the absolute, unconditional grant of the gospel. So that one might say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine; not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but because all these blessings are absolutely made over to me in the everlasting gospel." This deed of conveyance, thus seen by the help of the Spirit, was the grand demonstration of my right to pardon and salvation. And now, believing the love that God hath unto us, we love him because he first loved us. And so our love to God, and other graces, are a kind of secondary evidence; without any regard to which, we may, yea, previous to which we must, have assurance by the direct act of faith. For it is this assurance alone, which enkindles our love and all our graces.

Paul. But it has been already proved, that these blessings are not made over to us, as sinners, absolutely and unconditionally; but only to those who are in Christ by a true and living faith. Yours, my dear Theron — forgive me this freedom — yours is a false gospel; a false spirit; a false faith; a false love; all is false: built at bottom on no evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason."

Ther. But amidst all this error and delusion, how shall we know the truth?

Paul. By making the written word our rule, our only rule. Once the question was, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, "Art thou he that should come? or, look we for another? Go and show John," said our blessed Savior, "those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." These were the characters of the Messiah, according to the sacred writings of the Old Testament; and to these he appeals. Now the question is concerning Theron. Is he a true believer, a real convert, a Christian, that our Lord will own at the day of judgment? Well, go read, say I, our Savior's Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; the meek," etc. etc., to the end. And see, Is my Theron a man of this character? If so, his house is built upon a rock. If not, it is built upon the sand. If the Holy Spirit has wrought so great a miracle as to make you such a man, this is what the devil cannot do. This is such a witness of the Spirit as will pass at the great tribunal, and you will need no other. But without this, ten thousand revelations will avail you nothing. Nay, but that will be your certain doom — "I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

Had one appeared, and claimed to be the Messiah, without performing those mighty works our Savior did, would any have been obliged to give credit to his testimony? No, surely. And does a spirit come, and testify that my Theron is a child of God, without performing the mighty work of sanctification? Is Theron obliged to give credit to its witness? By no means. If the Holy Spirit takes away the heart of stone, and gives you a heart of flesh; writes God's law in your heart, and puts truth in your inward part, so that you walk in his statutes and keep his commandments, the work is done. You are a true convert. You will be saved. But without this, all is nothing.

Ther. But have not many good men had this immediate witness and testimony of the Spirit I am pleading for?

Paul. How can you know, my dear Theron, that ever there was a good man, since the foundation of the world, who had this witness? We have no instance in Scripture, nor does the word of God lead us ever to look for such a thing.

Ther. How can I know? Strange question! When some of the best men in the world have held to the immediate witness.

Paul. If we do certainly know our good estate by our sanctification, is not the immediate witness needless? If men do not certainly know they are good men, by their sanctification, who on earth can tell but that they are hypocrites? And so, but that their immediate witness comes from the devil? If they cannot tell, to be sure you and I cannot; nor will their immediate witness prove the contrary, unless you can demonstrate that Satan never transforms himself into an angel of light. Besides, men may "hold to the immediate witness" that never had it, through some mistake; and if men have assurance by their sanctification, it is not very likely that God should make them an immediate revelation, merely to clear up a point already clear: that is, work a kind of miracle, when there is no need of it. Besides, my dear Theron, how will you know whether your immediate revelation comes from God, or from the devil? Will you know by the fruits? No; for this is to "try the witness of the Spirit by the sincerity of your graces;" and then, as you say, "the testimony of the Spirit will stand you in no stead," will be of no service. Will you know without any respect to the fruits? But how? Leave holiness out of the account, and what is there of this kind but what the devil can do? If he can, how do you know but he will? How do you know but he does? Go to the Anabaptists in Germany, in Luther's time; go to the enthusiasts in England, in Cromwell's time; and

see what the devil has done in former ages. Yea, I could name towns and persons in New England, where, and in whom, Satan's mighty works have been to be seen, within less than twenty years ago. All the country knows, that some who appeared to have the highest confidence of a title to heaven, have sufficiently proved to the world that they were deluded, by their immoral lives since. Will you, after all, say that it is a sin to doubt; and that you ought to be strong in faith, and give glory to God? Yet you must remember that it is all "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." And this you know! And this you own!

Who, my dear Theron, who that hath a soul to save, would, with his eyes open, dare to venture his all, for eternity, on such a foundation as this! But, which is still more surprising, who, among all rational creatures, can look upon that foundation, which Christ himself calls a rock, but as the stalk of a tulip compared with this! *

O my dear Theron, you will excuse me this freedom, this kind and well meant freedom. A minister of Christ ought not to flatter. Nor is it your interest to be soothed. The plain, naked, honest truth is what we all need to know. See with your own eyes. Judge for your own self. For your own precious, immortal soul lies at stake.

As to the three questions you proposed, you have now my opinion, and the sum is this: The true convert having, in regeneration, had his eyes open to behold the glory of God and Jesus Christ, the glory of the law and of the gospel, he approves of the law as holy, just, and good; he believes the gospel to be from God, acquiesces in that way of life, trusts in Christ the great Mediator, returns home to God through him, to be forever the Lord's; and being united to Christ by faith, he receives the Holy Spirit to dwell in him forever. In consequence of which, he brings forth fruit; growing in grace, and persevering therein, through all changes and trials, to the end of his life. And so an assurance of a title to eternal life is in such sort attainable by believers, in all ordinary cases, that it must be owing to their fault if they do not enjoy it. However, no honest man ought to believe his state to be good with more confidence than in exact proportion to his evidence; nor is there any evidence that will pass with our final Judge, or that ought to be of any weight with us, but real holiness. A communication of divine grace, in a large and very sensible degree, is that whereby the Spirit of God makes it evident to our consciences, beyond all

* The reader may see this subject, namely, The Witness of the Spirit, thoroughly discussed in Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections.

doubt, that we are the children of God; and not by an immediate revelation.

Ther. But what do you think of the case of backsliders? May not they be in the dark about their state; and what ought they to do?

Paul. They may be in the dark, and full of doubts and fears; nor can they ever find rest to their souls, until they remember from whence they have fallen, repent, and return home to God through Jesus Christ. As their departing from God is the source of all their woe, so their case admits of no remedy but to repent and return to God through Jesus Christ again. It would do a backslider no good to go to God and say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." For his religion does not grow up from this belief; but from "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." But I have not time to enter upon this subject. I recommend to you Mr. Shepherd, on the Parable of the Ten Virgins; in which, if some expressions are not so accurate, yet, on the whole, it is one of the best books I know of, for saints under backslidings. It is so useful a book, that I wish there was one of them in every Christian family.

Here, my dear Aspasio, the conversation stopped. I sat silent. I was self-condemned. Eternity all opened to my view. "I am a lost creature! Heaven pity my case!" The tears rolled from my eyes; I could conceal my case no longer; I was persuaded Paulinus had a tender, compassionate heart; therefore, I addressed him in the following manner:—

Ther. Indeed, sir, I need not hear you upon the case of a backsliding saint. I have heard enough already. I am convinced I was never right. I thought so before I came to see you; and all you have said has confirmed me in this opinion. I have acted the part of a disputant; but I have done it only for light, to see what answers you would make to what might be said. Alas! I have all to begin anew! Just every step I have taken is wrong. My first manifestation of the love of Christ, and pardon of my sins, was wrong; the thing revealed for the truth, was a lie. My first act of faith was wrong; the thing believed for truth, was a lie. My love and joy, and all my religion, was wrong; only the result of self-love and delusion. My living by faith was wrong; it was only quieting my conscience, by holding fast my delusion. My aversion to sanctification's being the only evidence of a good estate, was wrong. I could not stand trial by that test; and yet nothing else will pass at the great tribunal, with my final Judge. But I could have no comfort this way. It tended only to doubts and fears. And doubts

and fears tended to destroy all my religion. All my religion was founded in delusion; nor was there any way for it to subsist, but to hold fast delusion, and refuse to let it go. I have been doing so now for a long time, and had continued to do so to my dying day, had not some of those texts of Scripture you have so often referred to given me a shock; and last week I had such awful apprehensions of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, the amazing dreadfulness of going into eternity self-deceived, as penetrated my very heart. This induced me to make you these visits. And now you see my case — my dreadful case! O, dear Paulinus, be you my friend, my spiritual guide! What shall I do?

Paul. How much are poor lost sinners, in this benighted world, to be pitied! Generally their days, their precious days, are spent away secure in sin! If at any time they are a little awakened to see their danger, how apt are they to take any way for comfort but the right! (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) We are actually in so ruined a state, that unless God interposes of his mere sovereign grace, and by the influences of his blessed Spirit guides us, we shall wander from the narrow road, get lost, and perish! (Matt. xi. 25.) We are enemies to God, blind to his beauty, disinclined to a reconciliation, averse to real holiness, and any kind of false religion suits such depraved hearts better than the true. Really, to love God for his own infinite amiableness, to choose him for our portion, to look upon sin as an infinite evil, to esteem the law as holy, just, and good, which requires sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, and to place all our dependence on free grace through Jesus Christ, are, of all things, most contrary to our corrupt biases. Our native disinclination to the right way, renders us apt to take the wrong; and having once took it, obstinately to persist in it.* Happy for you, my dear Theron, that you are brought so far to see your error.

And, for your future conduct, take these hints: —

1. Beware you return not to that flesh-pleasing, presumptuous way of living, which had well nigh proved your ruin. Your friends may invite you back; your love of ease and present comfort, will second all their arguments, and give them tenfold more weight than they really have. Know it, O my

* Jonah ii. 8. "They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy;" that is, go contrary to their own interest. How often have these words been applied by some writers to persuade Christless sinners to believe that all the blessings of the gospel are their own; when rather they stand as a warning to all not to observe lying vanities, lest they forsake their own mercy, and go contrary to their own eternal interest. Nothing being more contrary to the interest of a poor sinner, than to believe delusion, and settle down on a false foundation.

Theron, there is a long eternity before you. It is worth your while to strive to enter in at the strait gate; yea, to take the kingdom of heaven by violence.* Therefore, count no self-denial, no pains, no endeavors too great; but do with thy might what thy hand findeth to do.

2. It is absolutely necessary that you see your need of Christ, in order to come to him. Coming to Christ, in its own nature, supposes that we see our need of him. You cannot see what you need Christ for, unless you see your true character and state according to law. The law is the appointed schoolmaster to lead sinners to Christ. The law requires perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. It requires us to love God with all our heart, as being infinitely lovely. The least defect merits eternal woe. If you take measure by this law, as your rule, your true character will appear dead in sin, at enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. And if you judge of your state according to this law, you are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you; you are lost; you stand guilty before God; and if the law is holy, just, and good, your mouth is stopped. The Lord is righteous when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth, although you should perish forever. All this you must see; yea, you must feel it through and through your heart, as did the apostle Paul. "The commandment came, sin revived, and I died." It is for want of thorough conviction, that so many awakened sinners take up with false comfort. Their wound was never searched to the bottom. It was skinned over too soon; and such slighty cures, though more easily performed, may prove fatal in the end. But let your legal convictions be ever so deep, you will perish, unless of his mere sovereign grace.

3. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. You are blind, quite blind, to the divine beauty, and consequently blind to the beauty of the divine law; and so, consequently, blind too to the beauty of Christ, as dying to answer the demands of the law; and consequently under the power of unbelief. Every unregenerate man has the spirit of infidelity in his heart. (1 John v. 1. Rom. x. 9. Ps. xiv. 1.) You can never cordially believe that the Son of God became incarnate, and died to answer the demands of a law in its own nature too severe. Such a substitution cannot appear to be of God, glorious

* Mr. Edwards's Sermons on Pressing into the Kingdom, and on the Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners, are proper for such as Theron.

and divine; but rather shocking! You can never heartily approve of the law, (which requires us to love God for his own divine excellences, with all our hearts, on pain of eternal damnation for the least defect,) as holy, just, and good, unless God appears in your eyes as one infinitely lovely. So depraved are you, so entirely devoid of a relish for divine beauty, that God never will appear thus amiable in your eyes, unless you are born of the Spirit, have divine life immediately communicated to you from God, have a supernatural and divine sense, taste, relish, imparted to you from on high. Your heart is like the chaos; "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." And dark, eternally dark, it would have been, had not God said, "Let there be light." So, unless he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in your heart, you will abide in eternal darkness, blind to divine beauty, to the glories of God and Christ, of law and gospel; and if the gospel continues thus hid from you, you are lost, forever lost. (2 Cor. iv. 3, 6.)

If the divine law, in itself, is not holy, just, and good, Christ's dying to answer its demands cannot make it so. If the law was too severe, Christ's death was a most shocking affair! A dislike of the divine law, as too rigorous, is the root of all the chief errors in the Christian world; yea, it is the root of the prevailing infidelity of the present age; and now it lies at the bottom of all your hard thoughts of God, O my Theron; which the devil is not the author of, as some imagine, in such cases; and is a mighty bar to your believing in Christ. And nothing can effectually remove it, but divine light, imparted in regeneration.*

* No man can understandingly and heartily look to, trust in, or depend upon, the mediation of Christ, unless he sees his need of him as a mediator. No man can see his need of the mediation of Christ, unless he sees that which renders his mediation needful. Now, the goodness and excellency of the divine law which we have broke, is the only thing which originally rendered the mediation of Christ needful. But for this, the sinner might have been saved without a mediator, without an atonement, as well as with; nay, better; for, if the law were too severe, it had evidently been more honorable for God to have repealed or abated it, than to have appointed his Son to answer its demands in our stead.

Some seem to think that the law, although suited to the strength of man before the fall, and so a good law for an innocent, holy creature, yet is too rigorous for a fallen world; and therefore imagine that Christ died to purchase an abatement, and to bring it down to a level with our present weakness. But if the law was too severe, the justice of the divine nature would have moved the Governor of the world to have made all proper abatements; nor was the death of Christ needful in the case. Surely Christ need not die merely to get justice done us.

Some seem to look upon God the Father as all made up of wrath, the sinner's enemy; and on God the Son, as all made up of love, the sinner's friend; and imagine he died to assuage his Father's anger, and move his compassions towards poor sinners; and so they love Christ, while they hate God and his law. But

4. Bid a final adieu to vain and carnal companions, to all sinful and carnal pleasures and pastimes, and to every known sin, all which tend to stupefy the heart; and by reading, meditation, and prayer, endeavor with all your might to obtain a realizing sense of your true character and state. Cast yourself at the foot of sovereign grace, and cry with the blind man, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" "That I may see and know what I am, what I deserve, what I need; and the only way to obtain relief, by free grace through Jesus Christ." However, that you may not trust in your own doings to recommend you to the divine favor, nor be encouraged from your own goodness to hope for mercy, constantly remember, —

5. That the divine law, which you are under, requires that you love God for himself; whereas, all you do is merely from self-love. Yea, it requires you to love God with all your heart; whereas, there is no love to God in your heart; and it requires this sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, for the least defect; so that by the law you are already condemned. By mere law you are therefore absolutely and forever undone. You stand guilty before God. But mere law is the rule of right, and standard of justice. If justice should take place, you then see your doom. There is no hope from this quarter. Wherefore you lie at the mercy of God, his mere mercy, who is absolutely unobliged to grant you any relief for any thing

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this is all a mere chimera. The Father is as full of love and goodness as the Son. The Son is as holy and just, as great a friend to the law, and as great an enemy to sin, as the Father. They are both of one heart. Yea, they are both one God. (John x. 30.)

Some seem to resolve the whole of God's law and government, and the death of Christ, into the mere arbitrary will of God; as though the whole were not the result of wisdom, of infinite wisdom, but rather of mere arbitrary will. But it does not appear by Scripture, or otherwise, that the infinitely wise God ever determines any thing without reason, or does any thing but what is wise for him to do. But rather the whole of divine revelation joins to confirm the truth of St. Paul's observation, that "God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." All his perfections, if I may so speak, sit in council; and all his decrees and works are the result of infinite holiness, justice, and goodness, directed by infinite wisdom.

There is but one way to solve the difficulty; there is but one thing can ever satisfy our hearts. A sight of the glory of the God of glory, will open to view the grounds and reasons of the law, and convince us that it is holy, just, and good, glorious, and amiable, and worthy to be kept in credit, to be magnified and made honorable, by the obedience and death of the Son of God. But, then, if the law is good, we, who have broke it, are not fit to live. Death is our due. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. His nature, law, and honor, call aloud for our destruction. He cannot be just, if he does not destroy us. It will bring everlasting reproach upon his government, to spare us, considered merely as in ourselves. When this is felt in our hearts, then, and not till then, shall we feel our need of Christ, and be prepared to look to the free grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ, and to exercise faith in his blood, who was set forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

you can do. He might justly have left all mankind in this state, without a Savior; and he may, on the same grounds, as justly leave you in this state, without a Sanctifier. He did not give his Son to save this lost world for our righteousness' sake; Yea, had we been righteous, we should not have needed his Son to die in our stead. Nor does God give his Holy Spirit to convert any poor, perishing sinner, for his righteousness' sake; Yea, it is his being entirely destitute of all that is spiritually good, and dead in sin, that occasions his standing in perishing need of converting grace. And although all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, yea, and in him amen, yet, as to those who are out of Christ, they are so far from being entitled to the promises, that the wrath of God abideth on them. Therefore, —

6. If ever you are renewed by the Holy Ghost, it will be, not for any goodness in you, but merely from God's self-moving mercy and sovereign grace, through Jesus Christ. (Tit. iii. 5, 6.)

7. How dreadful soever this representation makes your case appear, yet, if this is your true state, you must see it, that you may know your need of Christ and free grace, and be in a capacity, understandingly, to give a proper reception to the glad tidings of the gospel, namely, that through Christ, God is ready to be reconciled to the returning penitent, who justifies God, approves his law, quits all claims, and looks only to free grace, through Jesus Christ, for salvation. (Luke xviii. 13. Rom. iii. 24—26.)

8. Saving faith consists in looking to free grace, through Jesus Christ, for salvation; thus viewing God's law, and your own case, as they really be; and he that thus believeth, shall be saved. Therefore, repent and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out. Behold, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation! And by me, one of Christ's ministers, God does beseech you to be reconciled, and I pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God. For God hath made his only-begotten Son to be a sacrifice for sin, that all who are united to him by a true and living faith, might return to God with acceptance, and be justified, and have eternal life through him.

Ther. Every word you have spoken sinks down into my ears. The Lord grant the truth may pierce my heart through and through. The rest of my days I will devote to the business of my soul. I thank you for your kind instructions; I beg your prayers; the anguish of my heart calls me to retire Adieu! dear sir, adieu!

Paul. May the only wise God be your effectual instructor, my Theron! Adieu!

To my dear Aspasio,
These Dialogues are presented, by
Your affectionate
THERON.

LETTER II.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

NEW ENGLAND, *March* 12, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO:

MY melancholy letter of December last, with a copy of the substance of the conversation I had with Paulinus, at three several times, you have doubtless received long ago, as it is now three months since I wrote. If you have been impatient at hearing nothing from your friend for so long a time, I more; tossed to and fro, for months together, like a feeble ship at sea, in a tempestuous night, ready every moment to sink.

At first, (I mean after I had left Paulinus, and retired, as I had determined to spend much time in meditation and prayer,) I called in question a maxim he seemed to take for granted, that "we are all, by nature, under a law, requiring perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation;" which he so insisted was a glorious law, holy, just, and good. Thus I thought with myself: "Perfect obedience! That is more than we can yield. And am I forever lost for the first offence? How can that be just? Can the kind Father of the universe require more of his creature, man, than he can do? and then punish him with eternal damnation for not doing? Can this be right?" Indeed I now felt I had an Arminian heart.

But on a certain evening, as I was reading St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, in which he affirms, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; that the very heathen themselves are without excuse; that the whole world stand guilty before God, and every mouth stopped; that the law curseth every man who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them; and that Christ was made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of that very law,—I was greatly shocked and confounded. One while I said, "This law cannot

be right." But again, I said, "Why then was it not repealed? Why did the Son of God bear its curse, and die to answer its demands?" I looked through the Old Testament, I looked through the New; and this notion of the law I saw was so inwrought into both, that it must be granted, or the whole of divine revelation given up. I felt the heart of an infidel; I was full of doubts and scruples as to the truth of the Bible; and when I reflected on the external evidence of divine revelation, as represented by our late writers, particularly by Dr. Leland, whose view of deistical writers I had lately read, I was drove even to atheism. For if there is a God, the Bible must be true. But if the Bible is true, the law, in all its rigor, is holy, just, and good.

Thus I was unsettled in all my principles, and set afloat as on a boisterous ocean, like a ship without a compass or a helm; in great anxiety and deep perplexity, ready many times to conclude to go back, at all adventures, to my old hope, as the only way for rest; thinking I had as good live and die on a false hope, as live and die in despair.

Till, on a certain time, I began thus to reason in my heart: "Whence all these doubts, O my soul? Whence all these Arminian, Socinian, deistical, atheistical thoughts? Whence have they all arisen? From viewing the law of God, as requiring perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. But why? Had I rather turn an infidel, than approve the law as holy, just, and good? Is this my heart? Once I thought I loved God, and loved his law, and loved the gospel. Where am I now?" Those words of the apostle seemed to picture my very case — "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." This text engaged my attention and fixed my thoughts; and looking into my heart more and more, I found the spirit of an enemy to God and to his law in full possession of my soul.

Till now I had entertained, at least sometimes, a secret hope that my state was good; although it seemed as if I had quite given it up. But now I began in a new manner to see, or rather to feel, I was dead in sin.

A realizing sense of God, as the infinitely great being, the almighty Governor of the world, holy and just, a sin-revenging God, a consuming fire against the workers of iniquity, daily grew upon my heart, and set home the law in all its rigor. A fresh view of all my evil ways from my youth up, continually preyed upon my spirits. Eternity! Eternity! O, how dreadful it seemed! I watched, I prayed, I fasted. I spared no pains to obtain an humble, broken, contrite heart. But

notwithstanding my greatest efforts, my heart grew worse, my case more desperate, till, in the issue, I found myself absolutely without strength; dead in sin; lost; condemned by law; self-condemned; my mouth stopped; guilty before God. I was forced to be silent; as it was but fair and right that God should be an enemy to me, who was an enemy to him; and but just if he should forever cast me off. And in this case I had perished, had not mere sovereign grace interposed. But in the midst of this midnight darkness, when all hope seemed to be gone, at a moment when I least expected relief, — for the commandment came, sin revived, and I died, — even now, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in my heart. Thus was the case: —

It was in the evening, after the day had been spent in fasting and prayer, as I was walking in a neighboring grove, my thoughts fixed with the utmost attention on God, as a consuming fire against his obstinate enemies; on the law, as cursing the man that continueth not in all things written therein to do them; on my whole life, as one continued series of rebellion; on my heart, as not only dead to God, and to all good, but full of enmity against the divine law and government, and, shocking to remember, full of enmity against God himself. Feeling that my whole heart was thus dead in sin, and contrary to God, I felt it was a gone case with me. There was no hope, no, not the least, from any good in me, or ever to be expected from me. I lay at God's mercy, forfeited, justly condemned, lost, helpless, undone! And "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," I clearly saw, was the fixed resolution of the Almighty. Thus stood my case; a poor, wretched, sinful, guilty creature, completely ruined in myself! I retired to the most remote part of the grove; where, hid under the darkness of the evening, and the shade of spreading trees, no eye could see me. First, I smote on my breast; but could not look up to heaven, nor speak one word. I fell on my knees; but I could not speak. I fell prostrate on the ground, and felt as one ready to sink into eternal ruin; having no hope, unless from the sovereign good pleasure of my angry Judge. As I lay prostrate on the ground, a new scene gradually opened to my view. It was new, and it was exceeding glorious. God appeared not only infinitely great, and infinitely holy, as the Sovereign of the whole universe, but also infinitely glorious; even so glorious as to be worthy of all the love and honor which his law requires. The law appeared holy, just, and good. I could not but approve it from my very heart; and said within myself, ere I was aware, "Let all heaven forever love and adore the infinitely

glorious Majesty, although I receive my just desert, and perish forever!" Next came into view the whole gospel way of life, by free grace through Jesus Christ; the wisdom, glory, and beauty of which cannot be expressed. The law did bear the divine image, and was glorious; but the gospel exhibited all the divine perfections in a still brighter manner, and far exceeded in glory. I saw God might, consistently with his honor, in this way, receive the returning sinner, however ill deserving. I saw he was ready to do it; that all might come, even the vilest and the worst, encouraged by the self-moving goodness and boundless grace of God, and the mediation, merits, and atonement of Christ. I looked up to God through Jesus Christ for mercy, and through Jesus Christ gave up myself to the Lord, to be forever his, to love him and live to him forever. Here, prostrate on the ground, I thus lay above an hour, contemplating the ineffable glories of God, the beauty of his law, and the superabundant excellency of the gospel way of life by free grace through Jesus Christ. I believed the gospel, I trusted in Christ, and gave up myself to God through him, to be forever his, with a pleasure divinely sweet, infinitely preferable to the most agreeable sensations I had ever before experienced. What I enjoyed this hour, did more, unspeakably more, than overbalance all the distresses of months past.* To relate how I spent the night, and how I have spent my days and nights ever since, I shall omit; but you shall soon hear again, my dear Aspasio, from

Your affectionate

THERON.

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* Theron's narrative of his former supposed conversion, (Letter I.,) and of his experiences, (here,) is not designed to suggest, that either false or true converts all experience things, in every circumstance, just alike; but only to point out the general nature of these two kinds of conversion, in a manner so familiar, that the weakest Christian may see the difference; and if any Christian cannot recollect so exactly the particulars of his first conversion, yet, as all after acts of grace are of the same nature with the first, a clear understanding of the true nature of saving grace may help him to discern his true state.

N. B. What is the true nature of saving grace, is not to be decided by the experiences of this or that man, or party of men; but only by the word of God.

LETTER III.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

NEW ENGLAND, *April* 2, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO:

WITH pleasure I now again sit down to write to my distant friend, and send my heart beyond the Atlantic to my Aspasio. For neither time, nor place, nor any change, can wipe your memory from my mind.

Methinks, were I now with you, as once at the house, the hospitable house, of the wealthy and illustrious Philenor, I would tell you all my heart. I remember how you urged me to believe, and how I longed to find some safe foundation, some sure evidence, on which to build my faith; and with Thomas, to cry, "My Lord, my God!" Now I have found it! I have found it! I believe "that Jesus is the Christ." I believe, that "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation; to declare his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." I believe "that God raised him from the dead." I believe that "Christ is entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God," as the Jewish high priest of old entered into the holy of holies on the day of atonement, and that he is "the way to the Father," "the door," by whom men enter in; and that "whosoever will" may come to God through him. Wherefore I am emboldened to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, even into the very presence of the thrice Holy One of Israel, in whose sight the heavens are not clean; and to come to God in full assurance of faith, nothing doubting but that God is as willing to be reconciled through Christ, as the father was to receive the returning prodigal; and as ready to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, as ever parent was to give bread to a hungry child. (Heb. x. 19, 22. Matt. vii. 11.) "For he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things," if we accept his Son as he is offered, and come to God through him, for all things, as we are invited? For God's honor is safe, God's law is answered, God's justice is satisfied; and all my guilt, infinite as it is, is no bar in the way of my reception into the divine favor, free as his infinite grace, self-moving as his boundless goodness is, and appears to be, by the gift of his Son.

This way of salvation, my dear Aspasio, is glorious for God,

safe for the sinner, effectual to promote holiness, even "the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth;" and if the gospel is true, there is no room to doubt. "For we are constrained to believe on the clearest evidence." Yea, "our assurance is impressed" by complete demonstration.

It is glorious for God. For God's law and authority are as much honored as if the whole world had been damned; and his grace more glorified than if man had never fell. An incarnate God upon the cross, in the room of a rebellious world, sets God's infinite hatred of sin, his inflexible resolution to punish it, and the infinite goodness of his nature, in a light infinitely clear, infinitely bright; and contains a fund of instruction, which never can be exhausted, by angels and saints, throughout the endless ages of eternity. The more I think, the more I am swallowed up, confounded, overwhelmed! O, the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, of the love of God, which passeth all understanding! O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! The creation of the universe was a great work. It caused the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator clearly to be seen. But compared to the incarnation and death of the Son of God, the Creator, it is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind. Even the application of Christ's redemption in the latter day, is a more glorious work than the first creation of the world. "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Indeed, it had been but a small thing for the Creator, by his almighty word, to have called millions of such systems as ours into being; a thing not worthy to be noticed, nay, scarce worth one single thought, compared with — with what? Let all nature tremble at the news! — the incarnation and the death of the Almighty Creator, in the room of his rebel creatures, that the honor of his Father's law and government might be effectually secured, while sovereign infinite grace interposes to save the self-ruined, hell-deserving rebels, to the eternal disappointment of Satan, God's enemy, and our mortal foe.

And can it now, after all this, be a question, whether God is ready to be reconciled to those who, on his own invitation, return to him through Jesus Christ? Or can it be a question, whether Christ is willing to be their Mediator and High Priest, in the court of heaven, in the holy of holies above? What! after God has given his Son to die, that, consistently with his honor, he might receive such to favor, — he not willing? Infinitely incredible! What! after the Son of God has left his Father's bosom, to lie in a manger, to groan in the garden, and — be astonished, O ye heavens, and be ye horribly afraid! — to hang

and die upon the cross, in the room of a God-hating, Christ-murdering world; that he might honor his Father's law, break up Satan's plot, and open a way for the sinner's return! yet he not willing! — What! willing to die on the cross, and not willing to mediate in heaven? Infinitely incredible! Yea, if possible, more than infinitely incredible! So certain, my dear Aspasio, as the gospel is true, just so certain may your Theron be, that God is ready to be reconciled to the sinner, who returns to him through Jesus Christ. Nor does he need a new revelation in the case; nor does he need to be assured of any proposition not plainly revealed in the gospel. Enough has been already done! enough has been already said. But never did your Theron believe these things with all his heart, till by seeing the glory of the God of glory, he saw the grounds and reasons of the law, pronounced it holy, just, and good, and worthy to be magnified and made honorable, even by the death of God's own Son.

And this kind of faith, in the nature of things, cannot be without works. For, while your Theron, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, doth, with open face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; what can he do, but love, admire, adore the God of glory; and give up himself forever to him through Jesus Christ? And now, "how can we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" We are crucified with Christ; buried with him; risen with him: and can sin, after all, have dominion over us! Impossible. The gratitude, the ingenuity of unrenewed nature, I grant, is not to be depended upon. Israel sang God's praise, but soon forgot his works. But, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," from day to day, through the course of our lives, we are, we cannot but be, "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."

And, believing the gospel to be true, no doubt remains of the safety of our returning to God through Jesus Christ. His glory and beauty incline me to return. His grace through Christ puts courage in my heart. I return. I find rest to my weary soul. And by this I know my "faith is real, and no delusion," even because he hath given me of his spirit, (1 John iv. 13,) set his seal upon my heart, (Eph. i. 13,) made me his child, in the very temper of my soul, (Rom. viii. 16,) and in my heart his law is written, and in his ways I love to walk. (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) But as to this, Heaven forbid that your Theron's confidence should ever be greater than his evidence; his evidence, not only now, but in all future times.

I am, forever, your affectionate

THERON.

LETTER IV.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

NEW ENGLAND, *April* 3, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO:

MANY an agreeable hour have we wandered over all the works of nature; viewed the heavens above, the earth beneath, and surveyed the mighty ocean; nor did you ever fail to intermingle devout reflections. If, now, instead of painting the beauties of the creation, we rise at once to contemplate the glories of the Creator, glories infinitely superior to those of fields and forests, gardens and palaces; yea, infinitely superior to the bright expanse of heaven, adorned with all its shining orbs; no theme can, my Aspasio, better please.

God! how awful is the name! how great is the being! "Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Yea, all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." And so great is the excellency of the Divine Majesty, so exceeding great is his beauty, that to behold his glory, and love, and honor, and enjoy him, is heaven itself; it is the chief happiness of all that world. The seraphim, while he sitteth on his throne, high and lifted up as the great Monarch of the universe, through the brightness of his glory, cover their faces, unable to behold; and, as in a perfect ecstasy, cry, "Holy, holy, holy!" — This is his character, the character he exemplifies in all his conduct, as Lord of hosts, as Governor of the world; in a view of which, they add, "The whole earth is full of his glory."

The two grandest affairs, which, according to Scripture, ever have been, or ever will be, transacted in the government of this glorious monarch, are the work of our redemption by the death of his Son, and the final judgment of the world. These, therefore, let us contemplate, that in them we may behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.

Who was his Son? The brightness of his glory, and the image of his person; by whom, and for whom, all things were created; loved equally to himself, and honored with equal honors in all the world above. Let us view him on the cross, incarnate! view him there as an incarnate God, dying for sinners, and fix our attention, whole hours together, on this greatest and most wonderful of all God's works! The plan

was laid in heaven. This great event was determined in the council there. (Acts iv. 28.) All the perfections of the Godhead sat in council, when it was decreed the Son of God should die. Strange decree! Why was it made? Astonishing! Why did it ever come to pass? Did he die to move the compassions of his almighty Father towards a rebellious race? No; for to give his Son thus to die was greater grace than at one sovereign stroke to have cancelled all our debt, and pardoned all the world. Did he die to take away, or lessen, the evil nature and ill desert of sin? No; for infinite purity and impartial justice must look upon the rebellions of a revolted world as odious and ill deserving as if he had not died. He died to bear the punishment due to us. We were under the curse; he was made a curse in our room; set forth to be a propitiation, by his holy Father, to declare his righteous, and show the rectitude of his government in the eyes of all created intelligences; that he might be just, do as his law threatens, and yet not damn, but justify, the sinner that believeth in Jesus.

Eternal damnation was our due, according to the divine law; a law not founded in arbitrary will. A law arbitrarily made, may be arbitrarily repealed; but a law only declaring what is fit, must forever stand in force. To rise in rebellion against the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven, deserved eternal damnation; as he is infinitely worthy of the highest love and honor from all his intelligent creatures. His infinite amiableness and honorableness infinitely oblige us to love and honor him. All our heart, and mind, and strength are his due. The least defect deserves eternal woe. Thus the Omniscient viewed the case. His Son, in the same view, approved the law as strictly just. Both looked on the sacrifice and death of an incarnate God in the room of sinners, to open a way for their salvation, as a plan infinitely preferable to the law's repeal by a sovereign act. The Son had rather endure the most painful, shameful death, than that one tittle of the law should fail; it was so strictly just. God ought to have his due. The law barely asserts the rights of the Godhead. So much, however, was his due, as to be loved with all the heart, and obeyed in every thing; and so worthy was the Deity of this love and obedience, that the least defect deserved eternal death. "'Tis right, 'tis right," said the eternal Son, "that the first instance, or the least degree of disrespect to my eternal Father, should incur eternal ruin to the sinning creature; and I had rather become incarnate and die myself, than yield this point." That God is infinitely amiable; that he ought to be loved with all our heart; that the

infinite excellency of his nature infinitely obliges us, can never be set in a stronger light, than it is by the cross of Christ.

The infinite dignity of the Mediator, and the extreme sufferings he underwent, as an equivalent to our eternal woe, in the loudest manner proclaim that the law was just; just in the eyes of God; and just in the eyes of his Son. A law, threatening eternal damnation, infinite goodness would never have enacted, had not impartial justice called for it. Much less would infinite goodness have appointed God's own Son to answer its demands, if in its own nature too severe. To suppose the Son of God died to answer the demands of a law in its own nature cruel, is to make God a tyrant, and the death of his Son the most shocking affair that ever happened.

But what did this law, of which we so often speak, require? Say, my dear Aspasio, what was the first and chief command? Your Master's answer you approve. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." But why was love required? Because God was lovely. And why the penalty so great? Because his loveliness was infinite. If the infinite amiableness of the divine being does not lay an infinite obligation on his creatures to love him for being what he is, how can we justify the law's demands, or vindicate the wisdom of God in the death of his Son?

From the cross, where an incarnate God asserted the rights of the Godhead by his dying pains, let us pass to the awful tribunal, where the same incarnate God, arrayed in all his Father's glory, with all the hosts of heaven in his train, by the last sentence which he will pronounce upon his Father's enemies, dooming them to the burning lake, to welter for eternal ages in woe, will still proclaim the justice of the law. Would infinite goodness, would our compassionate Savior, would he who wept over Jerusalem, the kind and tender-hearted Jesus, love to pronounce a sentence so infinitely dreadful, if it were not strictly just? Yet he will do it, without the least reluctance; yea, with the highest pleasure, while angels and saints shout forth their hallelujahs all around him.

But can this ever be accounted for on any other hypothesis, than that the infinitely glorious Monarch of the universe appears, clearly appears, in that solemn hour, to be infinitely worthy of all that love and honor his law required, in being what he is; and so sin an infinite evil?

If sin is really an infinite evil, then it is meet that it should be discountenanced and punished as such, with an infinite punishment, that is, with the eternal pains of hell. And it was fit that the Governor of the world should make a law thus to

punish it; and fit that this law should be magnified and made honorable; and even wise in the eyes of infinite wisdom, that one, by nature God, should become incarnate, and die in the sinner's stead, rather than set the law aside. And on this hypothesis, the final doom of the wicked may well appear perfectly beautiful in the eyes of all holy intelligences. But sin cannot be an infinite evil, unless we are under infinite obligations to do otherwise.

Love is the thing required. Not merely a love of gratitude to God as an almighty Benefactor, but a love of esteem, complacence, and delight. We may feel grateful to a benefactor, merely as such, without even a knowledge of his general character; yea, when his general character would not suit us, did we know it. The Israelites, notwithstanding their joy and gratitude at the side of the Red Sea, were far from a disposition to be suited, to be pleased, to be enamored, with such a being as God was. Yea, the more they knew of him, the less they seemed to like him; so that in less than two years they were for going back to Egypt again. But if we may feel grateful towards God, merely as our almighty Benefactor, without the knowledge of his true character, yet esteem, complacence, and delight, suppose his true character known; as that is the object of this kind of love. And what can lay us under infinite obligations to love God in this sense, but his own infinite amiableness? Yet the divine law requires us to love God with this kind of love; and that with all our hearts, on pain of eternal damnation for the least defect. And this law was binding on all mankind previously to a consideration of the gift of Christ to be a Savior.

While, therefore, the law supposes our obligations to be infinite; and the death of the Son of God, and the final judgment, give the highest possible proof that the Omniscient esteems the law exactly right; the infinite dignity, excellency, and glory of the Most High God is hereby set in the strongest point of light. Take away the infinite amiableness of the Deity, and we, in effect, ungod him. He ceases to be the God of glory. He ceases to be a proper object of this supreme regard, in the eyes of finite intelligences. It is no longer an infinite evil not to love him; the law is no longer just; the death of Christ is needless; and the whole system of doctrine revealed in the Bible is sapped at the foundation; nothing remains, to a thinking man, but infidelity.

And yet, dear Aspasio, this was my very case. The infinite amiableness of the Deity, which is the real foundation of all true religion, was wholly left out of the account, in my love

and joy, and in all my religious affections. All my love, and joy, and zeal, arose from my faith; and my faith consisted but in believing that Christ, pardon, and heaven were mine. I rejoiced just like the graceless Israelites, in a sense of their great deliverance, and in expectation of soon arriving to the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands. Theirs was a graceless, selfish joy; and so was mine. Theirs was soon over; and so was mine. Their carcasses finally fell in the wilderness; and, but for the sovereign grace of God, this also had been my very case.

O my dear Aspasio, whose entertaining pen gains the attention of thousands on both sides the Atlantic, pity the ignorance of benighted souls, and guard them against the dangers which had well nigh proved the ruin of your own pupil.

Your affectionate

THERON.

LETTER V.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

NEW ENGLAND, *April* 4, 1759.

MY DEAR ASPASIO:

WHILE I view God the Creator, whose almighty word gave existence to the whole system; while I view him as the original Author and sole Proprietor of the whole universe; whose are all things in heaven and earth; I see the right of government naturally belongs to him. It is meet that he should be King in his own world; and he cannot but have a rightful authority over the works of his own hands. While I view him as moral Governor of the world, seated at the head of the intelligent creation, on a throne high and lifted up, heaven and earth filled with his glory as the Thrice Holy One; and hear him utter his voice, saying, "I am the Lord, and besides me there is no other God;" and hear him command all the world to love, and adore, and obey him, on pain of eternal damnation; a spirit of love to his glorious majesty inspires me with joy, and makes me exult to see him thus exalted and thus honored. I love to hear him proclaim his law, a law holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable. I am glad, with all my heart, the almighty Monarch of the universe is so engaged that all his subjects "give unto God the glory due unto his name."

His law, his glorious law, which once, enemy to God that I was, appeared like "the laws of Draco," now shines with a beauty all divine. I had almost said, it is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; for indeed it is an exact transcript of his glorious perfections, the very picture of his heart, holy, just, and good. (Rom. vii. 12.)

When the God of glory dwelt in the Jewish temple, in the pillar of cloud, over the mercy-seat, his law was, by his special command, deposited in the ark, the very holiest place in the holy of holies, as the dearest, choicest treasure. Thus was it done to the law, which God delighted to honor. But this honor, great as it was, is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind, since that infinitely greater regard to the divine law, which God has shown in the gift of his Son. An incarnate God, on the cross, has magnified the law, and made it honorable, beyond, infinitely beyond, what was ever done before. But all this honor, infinitely great as it was, was but just equal to what the law deserved.

While I view God, my Creator, my rightful Lord and Owner, my sovereign king, the God of glory, and see his infinite worthiness of supreme love and honor, I feel that the least disrespect of his glorious majesty is an infinite evil. I pronounce the law, in all its rigor, holy, just, and good. Even as a ministration of death and condemnation, it appears glorious, (2 Cor. iii. 7, 8,) and I heartily acquiesce in the equity of the sentence with application to myself. This makes me feel my need of Christ, and prepares my heart to return home to God, forever to live to him. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

The law, my dear Aspasio, threatens eternal damnation for the very first transgression, for even the least defect. (Gal. iii. 10.) I break the law every moment; and, therefore, every moment I merit eternal woe. Such an infinite evil is sin. It appeared glorious in the eyes of God thus to punish sin, when he made his law; it appeared glorious in the eyes of Christ that sin should be thus punished, when he went as a lamb to the altar, and voluntarily stretched himself upon the cross to die in the sinner's room. And in a clear view of the glory of the God of glory, I see the grounds and reasons of the law; it is holy, just, and good. I see why Christ was so willing to be nailed to the cross in the sinner's stead; to magnify the law and make it honorable. And I have fellowship, a fellow-feeling, with Christ in his sufferings; and, in the temper of my heart, am made conformable to his death. (Phil. iii. 10.) I feel towards God, and law, and sin, in a measure, as he did. Or, to express

all my heart in one emphatical phrase, "I am crucified with Christ." The law is good; I deserve to die. I lay my neck upon the block, or rather stretch my hands upon the cross, and say, The law is holy, just, and good, and cry, Amen, amen, amen, twelve times going, as God of old taught his church to do. (Deut. xxvi. 14, 20.)*

O my dear Aspasio, in the time of the late rebellion, when I lived in England, had I, through a hearty attachment to the pretender's interest, secretly poisoned ten of the house of lords, and twenty of the house of commons, from mere spite, only because of their loyalty to their rightful sovereign; and had I laid a plot to blow up king and parliament, burn the city of London, and deliver the nation into the hands of a Popish pretender, all through pure malignity; what would it have availed before a court of justice, after I was arraigned, convicted, and condemned, to have pleaded, "O, spare my life; I am sorry for what I have done; I will never do so any more; I will be a good and loyal subject for the time to come!" Especially if all the court knew I was a Jacobite by blood, and had shown myself a Jacobite, in ten thousand instances, all my life long, and had still very much of the heart of a Jacobite; and had lived and died a perfect Jacobite in heart and practice, were it not for some irresistible arguments, or rather something more

* I must confess, my dear Aspasio, I am shocked to hear some divines represent the law as a tyrant, as tyrannizing over Christ upon the cross, as tyrannizing over sinners, as being slain for its tyranny, etc. For these hard speeches are not so much against the law as against the God that made it. Just as if God and his law were tyrants, while Christ and his gospel are all made up of love! But, shocking as this is, yet I must own this was once the very temper of my heart. (See the Marrow of Modern Divinity, with Notes, p. 146.) I loved the gospel; I did not love the law. The dying love of Christ, O how sweet a theme! Law, obligation, duty, were disagreeable, dead, and legal things. Faith, pardon, joy, heaven, grace, free grace, these topics only ravished my heart. Christ loved the law, or he had never died; I only loved myself. The honor of his Father's law was dear to him, (Heb. i. 9. Ps. xl. 8. Matt. v. 17, 18;) myself alone was dear to me. I viewed his death, his dying love, as all for me; his agony in the garden, his bloody sweat, his dying groans, all out of love to me! This pleased my heart. His Father's glory I had never seen; the law's beauty I had never beheld. The wisdom of God in the death of his Son, I had never brought into the account. Love, love! love to me, to me! was all in all. This only ravished my heart. I loved myself, I only loved myself. Strange, that I should think my love to Christ so great! The very joy I had, to think he died for me, was a full proof that I loved him not at all; since I did not delight in the law, nor love the law, in honor to which he died. Had my wife, or child, or friend, or any whom I loved, been punished by that law, I had been full of grief, and thought it very hard; for indeed that law appeared to me like the laws of Draco. But, when Christ was the victim, I was pleased, for I loved myself; but Christ I did not love. I cared not what he suffered, nor why, if I myself was safe. In truth, if the law is not holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, the death of Christ, to answer its demands, is the most shocking affair that ever happened. But I was wholly swallowed up in self; and, "if I was but safe, I cared not how."

powerful than arguments, that had begun to give me a new turn of mind; would my penitence be esteemed any atonement for my horrid crimes? Nay, rather, would not the whole nation cry, "Away with such a vile wretch from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" And were I brought to view the whole affair in a right light, and to feel right, what would be the language of my heart? Would it not echo back the general cry, "Right! right! away with such a vile wretch from the earth; for, indeed, I am not fit to live!" And on the gallows, even in my dying agonies, I should not have the least reason to dislike the law, by which I was condemned; or to love my judges ever the less for pronouncing the sentence of condemnation upon me. But rather, with all my heart, I ought to approve the law as good; and esteem their conduct to be truly praiseworthy.

But to murder thirty of my fellow-worms, blow up king and parliament, burn a city, ruin a nation, viewed only as injuries to a civil community, and breaches of a civil law, are no crimes, in comparison with rising in rebellion against the infinitely glorious Monarch of the universe; compared with whom, the whole created system is less than nothing and vanity.*

Wherefore, in my best frames, in my devoutest hours, when I feel the greatest veneration for the Deity, and the greatest regard to his law, and am most sorry that I ever have been, and am still, such a vile rebel against my rightful Sovereign, the God of glory, I am so far from thinking that I am fit to live, that my whole heart is ready to say, "No! but infinitely unfit to live! Eternal death is my due! and hell my proper home!" Yea, it appears to me, although I had attained to love God and Christ in the same degree as St. Paul did, and were as willing to die in the cause of religion as he was, that yet I should merit hell every moment for not loving God and Christ more. And, therefore, with him I would have no confidence in the flesh; and would seek to be found, not in myself, but in Christ;

* Is it a sinner's duty to be willing to be damned? No, by no means. The damned will forever hate God. The sinner ought forever to love him. The damned will be forever miserable. The sinner is invited to be forever happy, through Christ. His duty is to be reconciled to God, and return to him through Jesus Christ. Indeed, were there no other way to support the honor of the divine government but by the eternal misery of the sinner, the sinner ought to be willing that the honor of the divine government should be supported, although at the expense of his eternal sufferings. God and Christ, angels and saints, will all be of this mind, at the day of judgment, with respect to the wicked. And they will all judge rightly. (Rom. ii. 2.) Nor will the wicked have any reason to dislike them for it; but rather to esteem their conduct herein truly praiseworthy. (Rev. xix. 1, 6.)

not having my own righteousness, but his; and would say, "In the Lord alone have I righteousness, and in him alone will I glory." (Is. xlv. 24, 25.)

Yea, suffer me to say, I apprehend, and verily believe, that even St. Paul himself deserved eternal damnation for that wickedness which God saw in his heart, then, at that instant, when a little before he died a martyr, he said, "I am now ready to be offered." For although he was willing, quite willing, to die for his Master, yet he did not love him perfectly, as he ought. He himself owns he had not already attained, nor was already perfect. But the least defect deserves punishment, yea, eternal damnation. Therefore St. Paul always felt in his heart that hell was his proper due; and always looked on the law, even as a ministration of death and condemnation, to be glorious, (2 Cor. iii. 7, 9,) and always placed all his dependence, for acceptance in the sight of God, on Jesus Christ. He did so, not only when first converted, but habitually, all the days of his life, to his very last breath.

O, in how lively, how striking a manner are all these sentiments expressed in those words of the blessed apostle, in Gal. ii. 19, 20, which were the genuine language of his heart, and give a picture of the inward temper of his soul! "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I live in the flesh," even to my latest breath, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Who loved me, as his own before the foundation of the world; and, in the fulness of time, gave himself for me, as one whom the Father had given to him. For, in the midst of these holy views and gracious exercises of heart, St. Paul's calling and election were always sure; and he steadily knew that he was of that blessed number for whom Christ died, with an absolute design to save. Yet this knowledge was not the foundation, but rather the consequence of his faith and holiness.

Your Theron does no more doubt of God's readiness to be reconciled to the sinner that returns to him through Jesus Christ, than he doubts of the truth of the gospel. He believes the one just as firmly as he believes the other. If the chief facts related in the gospel are true, he knows this consequence is equally true. If God has so pitied this apostate world as to give his own Son to die a sacrifice for sin, to answer the demands of his law, and secure the honor of his government, for this very end, that "he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" and if he has testified his accept-

ance of the atonement, by raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand in heaven,—I say, if these facts are true, your Theron knows the consequence cannot but be true, namely, that any sinner, how ill deserving soever, who, upon the invitation of the gospel, shall repent and be converted, shall return to God through Jesus Christ, he will be accepted, pardoned, and saved, for Christ's sake. And, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, I cannot but return and give up myself to God, through Jesus Christ, with all my heart. (Ps. cx. 3; ix. 10. John xvii. 3, 8.)

Such were the views, such were the tempers of the apostle Paul, who wrote, and of the Christians to whom he directed, his epistles, as he himself affirms. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) And it was under such views, and in consequence of such tempers, that they were assured the spiritual and everlasting blessings of the gospel were theirs; as another apostle asserts. (1 John ii. 3, 4, 5.) And in such views, and with such tempers, St. Paul might well expect that the consideration of the infinite goodness of God towards them, in their election, redemption, effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and in the eternal joys of heaven, to be certainly bestowed upon them, would powerfully animate them to present themselves a living sacrifice to God, to be forever entirely his. (Rom. xii. 1.)

The saints at Rome viewed the wrath of God as revealed from heaven against all ungodliness; against the least sin; felt themselves without excuse; their mouths stopped; guilty before God, according to law; a law holy, just, and good;—were therefore dead to the law and married to Christ; exercised faith in the blood of Christ, depending entirely on free grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. And, as by virtue of their union with Adam, they became sinners, so by virtue of their union with Christ, by a true and living faith, they became righteous; and were dead to sin, so that they could not any longer live therein. For they not only approved the law as holy, just, and good, but even delighted in the law of God after the inward man, and maintained a constant conflict against every contrary bias. For they were made partakers of the divine nature; had every one of them the spirit of Christ dwelling in them; and walked not after the flesh, but after the spirit; were daily led by the spirit, and lived under the government of divine grace, feeling the temper of children towards God, crying, Abba, Father. And if children, they knew they were heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And as they were willing to suffer with Christ, they expected to reign

with him; and they esteemed the sufferings of this present life not worthy to be compared with the glory they had in view, in a future state. Besides, they found by experience, that all their sufferings worked together for their good, brought them nearer to God, and made them more like him; and they were persuaded that nothing in life or death should ever separate them from the love of God, who, of his mere sovereign grace, had predestinated, called, and done all things for them; not because they had any claim to make, but because he would have mercy on whom he would have mercy; of the same lump, making one a vessel to honor, and another a vessel to dishonor; which sovereign right to dispose of his own grace, they saw, belonged to God; of whom, and by whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom be glory forever! Wherefore, as the fittest and happiest thing in the world, they brought themselves, soul and body, as the Jew used to bring his bullock to the altar, and presented themselves a living sacrifice to God; seeking daily to be more and more transformed into the divine image, and devoting themselves, in all humility and love, to the duties of their several places; not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. (Please to read the twelve first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.)

The saints at Ephesus also, who formerly had their understandings darkened, their hearts blind and alienated from God; yea, who were quite dead in sin, and so far from any right to claim mercy, that they were without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world; yea, even by nature children of wrath; yet these, of God's mere sovereign grace, according to his purpose before the foundation of the world, were quickened; had divine life communicated to them; were raised from the dead; were brought to know Jesus Christ, and trust in him; in consequence of which, they were sealed, had the Holy Spirit given to dwell in them, whereby they were furnished to all good works. And conscious to this divine change and to the glorious blessings they were now made partakers of, they were fervently engaged to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called; to live up to their holy religion; to forgive others as God had forgiven them, and in all things to imitate their heavenly Father, being followers all with singleness of heart, as unto the Lord, etc. (Please to read over the whole epistle.)

But time once was, O my dear Aspasio, when your Theron, not conscious of any sanctifying operations in his own breast, believed all the blessings of the gospel to be his, without any "evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason;" which belief

served to still his conscience, and keep him at ease, while blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and a stranger to divine life. And in this case, having no sufficient evidence from inherent graces to support his confidence, he was obliged, without any evidence at all from any quarter, resolutely to maintain his belief, by believing. O, what awful delusion! How was I like one blindfold; one destitute of any sense or reason, or knowledge of the Scriptures, led captive by Satan at his will! by Satan transformed into an angel of light!

O my dear Aspasio, pity an ignorant, benighted world, who love to flatter themselves, and to hear no cry from their teachers but *Peace, peace;* and guard them against the sad delusion which had well nigh proved the ruin of your own Theron.

If all your sentiments, as they exist in your own mind, are exactly right; if you had not the least design to convey one of those mistaken notions, which your Theron imbibed from your persuasive lips; if he misunderstood just every word, and framed a mere chimera in his own head, a chimera you abhor with all your heart; yet, O my kind, my tender-hearted, my dear Aspasio, pity an ignorant world, who are like generally to understand you as I have done; and in compassion to immortal souls, be entreated once more to take your fine, your entertaining, charming pen, which commands the attention of thousands and ten thousands through all the British dominions in Europe and America, and warn poor sinners of their dreadful danger; lest multitudes perish in the road, the bewitching, the enchanting road, once trodden by your own pupil; and to which, but for the sovereign grace of God, he had been forever lost. It is the humble and earnest request of

Your ever affectionate
THERON.

AN ESSAY

ON

THE NATURE AND GLORY

OF

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST:

AS ALSO ON

THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS,

AND THE

NATURE AND EFFECTS OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

DESIGNED AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE AUTHOR'S

LETTERS AND DIALOGUES

ON THE NATURE OF

LOVE TO GOD, FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AND ASSURANCE OF A TITLE TO ETERNAL LIFE.

"We all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image."

"But if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost." *St. Paul.*

PREFACE.

THERE are, perhaps, few, if any, among the various sects and parties of professing Christians, but that will readily give their assent to this proposition: "He who understands the gospel of Jesus Christ aright, sees it in its glory, believes it to be true with all his heart, and is affected and acts accordingly, is a true Christian, and will finally inherit eternal life." But put the question, What is the gospel of Christ? and let each one for himself, learned and unlearned, throughout Christendom, prepare and give in an answer, and it will be found that there is a great variety of opinions; and that the learned differ as much as the unlearned; and that the seemingly devout and religious differ as much as the more loose and profane. The more any man acquaints himself with the state of the Christian world at home and abroad, the more he converses with men and books, the more clearly will he discern this to be the true state of the case. And now, what shall be done?

To say, in this case, that, "notwithstanding circumstantial differences, the body of professing Christians agree in the main; and we must not be so exact, metaphysical, and nice," is the same as to say, "Let your ideas be so general, confused, and indeterminate about matters of religion, as that you may not distinctly discern the differences which do, in fact, take place; and be so very unconcerned about your eternal interest, as not to think it worth your while to look things to the bottom." Go on easy in this way, and cry out against, and condemn all exact thinking and clear reasoning in matters of religion, as metaphysics; a *hocus pocus* word, to blacken an inquiring disposition, and to justify an astonishing inattention,

in a "matter of infinite, of everlasting concern;" and this while all men of sense agree to commend the most exact, thinking, and clear reasoning on any other subject but that of religion.

To say, "It is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good," is the same as to say, "Paganism and Mahometanism are as safe ways to heaven as Christianity," which is downright infidelity.

To say, "good men may differ; there are more ways to heaven than one, all equally safe; it is needless to be at pains to look things to the bottom," is much the same as to say, "Let every one sincerely live up to his own scheme, and he will be safe," which again will land one on the shores of infidelity.

When our blessed Savior sent his apostles abroad into the world, it was with this commission: Go, preach the gospel to every creature, and he that believeth — the very gospel I send you to preach — and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not — the very gospel I send you to preach — shall be damned. And, according to this commission, they went and preached, and gathered churches, and then said, not from an uncharitable disposition, but merely viewing things in the light of their Master's words, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." And when false teachers arose, and endeavored to accommodate the gospel scheme a little better to the taste, the natural taste, of mankind, the very chief of the apostles, as it were, stepped forth into the view of the whole Christian world, and, with an assurance and solemnity becoming one inspired by Heaven, said, "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." "But what shall I do?" says a poor, ignorant, benighted soul, anxious for his eternal welfare. "Were all learned, religious sort of men agreed, I should think I might safely believe as they believe; but now I am perfectly

disconcerted and confounded. And is it likely such a poor, ignorant creature as I am should ever find the truth, and see to the bottom of these controversies, so as to know what is right and what is wrong? What shall I do?"

Were the differences subsisting in the Christian world really owing to any obscurity in divine revelation itself, I do not see how poor, ignorant people could be to blame in being thus at a loss. Or, indeed, if, after all, they should happen to believe wrong, to mistake some false gospel for the true one, I do not see how they could be to blame, much less so much, so very much to blame, as to merit eternal damnation. When, therefore, our blessed Savior so peremptorily declares, "He that believeth not shall be damned," let him be who he will among all mankind, who shall hear the gospel, it is a complete demonstration, that, in the judgment of our blessed Savior, the gospel revelation is quite plain enough, upon a level even with vulgar capacities; so that it cannot be misunderstood or misbelieved by any individual, unless the fault is in himself; yea, unless he is so greatly to blame in the affair as justly to merit eternal damnation. To say otherwise, is to charge our Savior with injustice in denouncing eternal damnation against every unbeliever; which, again, is no better than downright infidelity.

"But how can these things be?" may an inquisitive reader say; "for, if the true gospel of Christ were so clearly revealed in the sacred writings, how unaccountable is it that the Christian world so greatly differ?" Not unaccountable at all, only granting what must be granted, or Christianity be given up, that the true gospel of Christ contains a system of sentiments diametrically opposite to every vicious bias in the human heart. Such a system it contains, or it did not come from God. And if it does contain such a system, then, so long as the generality of mankind are under the influence of their vicious biases, they will naturally seek darkness, rather than light; self-justifying error, rather than self-condemning truth; and it is well known how apt men are to believe that to be true which they wish to have so in other matters besides that of

religion. Besides, tell me, whence was it, that, in the apostolic age, whence was it, that, in the very days of miracles and inspiration, professed Christians began to differ? Was it because the sacred writings were obscure? Why, then, did they not inquire at the mouths of the apostles, who were yet alive, and who all agreed among themselves? Nay, inquire at the apostles' mouths. Indeed, no; they would rather call their inspiration into question, than submit to their decision. St. Paul found himself so vigorously opposed by false teachers among the Galatians, that, with all his miracles, inspirations, and elaborate reasonings, he could not keep up the credit of his scheme, no, not even among his own converts, who once were ready to pluck out their eyes for him; rather, in endeavoring to keep the truth up, his own credit sunk by the means, (Gal. iv. 16;) and, a little before his death, after full experience of the nature of error and delusion, he plainly tells his son Timothy that the case with some was really hopeless; saying, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." And, while the apostles were some of them yet living, numbers of their converts actually separated from their churches; numbers of their graceless converts, I mean. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for, if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."

Now, it cannot be pretended there was any want of external light and evidence, needful to discern and ascertain the truth, in that age; and, nevertheless, matters began to work then very much as they have all along since. It is not, therefore, through want of light and evidence externally held forth, that men have gone into error, in one age and another, who have had the Bible in their hands; but it has been entirely owing to the vicious state of their minds. And therefore St. Paul reckons heresies among the works of the flesh, and gives them a place along with adultery, fornication, witchcraft, murder, drunkenness, etc., as being criminal in the same sense with them. (Gal. v. 19—21.)

And indeed the sum and substance of the gospel may be

reduced to two or three points, which must be in a manner self-evident to a mind rightly disposed; or, to use our Savior's words, to those who have "a good and honest heart;" for, as all Christians were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, so right apprehensions of the character and offices of these three is the sum of all Christian knowledge. For he who believes God the Father, the Supreme Governor of the world, to be by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of that supreme love and honor, and universal obedience, which the divine law requires at our hands, and that, consequently, his law is holy, just, and good; and he who believes that God the Son, the express image of the Father, became incarnate, and died to do honor to the divine law, was set forth to be a propitiation to declare his Father's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer; and he who believes that God the Holy Ghost is appointed to be an enlightener and sanctifier, to bring sinners to understand the truth, see it in its glory, believe, love, and obey it: he who understands and believes these points cannot fail to understand and believe all the rest; for all doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion natively results from these fundamental truths. Besides, these fundamental truths give light to each other; so that, if once the glory of God, the Supreme Governor of the world, is seen, the reason and nature of his law will be plain; and, if that is plain, the design of the incarnation and death of the Son of God will be evident. And then the whole gospel plan will naturally open to view, and appear to contain a complete system of religious sentiments, harmonious and consistent throughout, perfect in glory and beauty. And, while we discern the opposition of this system of truths to every vicious bias in the human mind, the nature and necessity of the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to bring us rightly to understand the gospel, see it in its glory, and love and practise it, will be easily discerned; and, at the same time, every one, well acquainted with his own heart, may discern the true source of all the various errors which have been

broached in the Christian world; for the root of them all is in the heart of every child of Adam.

To assist the candid, inquisitive reader to look down into the bottom of truth and error, and see things in their original sources and in their mutual connections, that the true Scripture scheme may rise into clear view, and the first spring of all the chief errors now in vogue may be clearly discerned, is the design of the following sheets.

The reasonings are not built upon here and there a Scripture text, detached from its connection with its context, to carry away the reader's mind with the mere sound of words; rather all the reasonings are at bottom founded on Scripture facts, viewed in a Scripture light; facts which cannot be denied without giving up our baptism, and overthrowing Christianity by wholesale. And a chief design is, to lead all parties, if they will but attend to the subject, to see that the great doctrines of the gospel are not disputable points; yea, so far from it, that there is no consistent medium between the ancient apostolic Christianity and infidelity.

The subject is noble; the design is good; the execution, far as it is from being equal to so noble a subject, is presented to the candid reader's critical perusal and mature judgment. With a becoming generosity, overlook the blemishes of the manner; with the greatest eagerness, attend to the matter; seek the truth, search for it as for silver, dig for it as for hid treasure; neither believe nor disbelieve, but in exact proportion to evidence: to the law and to the testimony, like the noble Bereans.

N. B. The reader may be advertised, that, some time after this Essay was begun, Mr. Cudworth's further defence of Theron and Aspasio came to hand; some remarks upon which are, therefore, inserted here and there in the margin, so far as appears needful to clear and establish the truth.

March 11, 1762.

INTRODUCTION,

CONTAINING

AN INVITATION TO STUDY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; AS IT GIVES THE MOST GLORIOUS DISPLAY OF ALL THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS THAT EVER WAS MADE.

THE first and fundamental principle of all religion, natural and revealed, is this, namely: That there is a God, an absolutely perfect and infinitely glorious and amiable Being. And it is universally agreed to, by all who believe the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, that this God is the Creator of all things; that in the beginning he created the heavens and the earth; and that by him were created all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him. And if there is a God, an absolutely perfect Being, and if he created all things, then all things are his, by an original, entire, underived, independent right; and if so, it must of course naturally belong to him to take care of his own world, to order and dispose all events according to his pleasure; and the whole of his conduct in the government of the universe must be, of necessity, like himself, perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty; worthy to be admired and rejoiced in by all created intelligences. And if all God's works are glorious, much more must the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, the chief, by far the chief of all his works, exceed in glory.

It is evident from the whole tenor of Scripture, that, as God is by nature invisible, one whom no eye hath seen or can see, and into whose essence no created intelligence can look; so

one chief design of all his works is to manifest himself; to exhibit the clearest and completest representation of all his perfections; and particularly to hold forth to the view of the intellectual system, the most lively image of his heart, of his moral perfections; that, as it is above the capacity of finite intelligences to look immediately into his heart, and discern how he views things, and is affected towards them, they might hereby be enabled to form right conceptions of his nature, and so under advantages to behold his infinite, incomprehensible glory, so far as their finite capacities will admit.

The visible creation, the heavens and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, with all the laws, order, and harmony, in the natural system, as they are specimens of the almighty power, infinite wisdom and goodness; so they may be considered as a designed manifestation of these perfections, as inanimate pictures of the invisible glories of the invisible God. But if we turn our eyes off from the material world, the meanest part of God's creation, to the view of holy intelligences, who were, in a peculiar sense, made after the image of God, here we shall behold living images of the living God. But still all this is finite; the inanimate pictures and the living images are finite; but God himself is absolutely infinite. These representations, therefore, are very scanty, very deficient; and but a small portion of God can be known by them. Wherefore infinite wisdom hath laid a plan, in which he himself, as it were, may cease to be invisible, may come out to the view of the intellectual system in all his glory, in the person of Jesus Christ his Son, who is the image of the invisible God, even the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. The vail is rent; the holy of holies is exposed to public view, and the glory of the Lord is to be seen by saints on earth, and principalities and powers in heaven, in the face of Jesus Christ. This manifestation, therefore, of God in and by Jesus Christ, which is called the *Gospel*, is the completest and brightest exhibition of all the divine perfections that ever was, or that, perhaps, ever will be made. The inspired apostle might well then call the gospel "the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ;" as, beyond all doubt, the glory of the work of our redemption by Christ, exceeds, far exceeds in glory, not only the glorious works

of men, or more glorious works of angels, but even exceeds in glory all the other glorious works of God himself.

While, therefore, men of the greatest genius think themselves well employed in contemplating the laws, order, and harmony of the natural world, let us now, with the greatest attention and ardor, join with principalities and powers in heaven, in prying into the glorious mysteries of God's moral system, all presupposed or implied in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the rather, because it is possible that, while we live under the clear light of the gospel, we may be blind to all its peculiar glories; and so never believe it to be true, nor reap any saving benefit from it; but be finally lost—eternally lost. For, as St. Paul observes, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Wherefore, while we search into the nature and glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ, let us pray that "he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, would shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; that we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord."

In these words of the apostle just cited, to which a special reference will be had in the following Essay, these things may be observed: that the gospel of Christ is a glorious gospel—that the glory of the gospel is seen by all who sit under it, that are not blind; and all who see its glory do believe, savingly believe—that those who are blind to the glory of the gospel, do not believe it; the gospel is hid from them, and they are lost—that the devil's grand scheme is to keep men blind to the glory of the gospel; as knowing, that this is the direct method to prevent their ever believing it, to the saving of their souls—that spiritual illumination, whereby men are brought to see the glory of the gospel, to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is as immediately from God, as was natural light, when God commanded the light to shine out of darkness; saying, "Let there be light, and there was light"—that all

who behold this glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.

These propositions are expressly declared, or plainly implied, in the words of the apostle. Wherefore let us inquire into the nature and glory of the gospel of Christ; into the nature and consequences of spiritual blindness; and into the nature and effects of divine illumination.

ESSAY.

SECTION I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL.

THE word *gospel* signifies *good news.* The good news comes from heaven; from God, the great King of the universe. It was first more darkly hinted to Adam, immediately after the fall; and afterwards to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by God himself; and by Moses and all the prophets, in God's name, to Israel of old. But last of all, the whole glorious plan was fully brought to light, and published to the world, by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

And he who will be at the pains carefully and critically to read the Bible through, and take a full view of the whole account as it there stands, will find the following particulars, among many others, implied in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ: —

1. That God is considered as the moral Governor of the world; that man is considered as a proper subject of moral government; that God's law is considered as holy, just, and good; that man has broken it, is without excuse, stands guilty before God, already condemned; and is so far from penitence, that he is dead in sin, an enemy to God, and at enmity against his law and government.

2. That God did not judge it suitable to the honor of his majesty, or agreeable to the honor of his law and government, in a sovereign way, by the influences of his Holy Spirit, to bring man to repentance, and then by a sovereign act of grace to pardon him, and receive him to favor, and entitle him to eternal life, without a Mediator and an atonement.

3. That God has appointed his own Son to be a Mediator, and made him a curse, to redeem us from the curse, that through him he might communicate the Holy Spirit; and set him forth to be a propitiation, that through faith in his blood,

we might receive forgiveness of sins; and yet God be just, and the honor of his law be secured in the sight of all worlds.

So that the doctrine of Christ's atonement, considered in its antecedents, effects, and consequences, is the sum and substance of the gospel. This is the good news, that "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and therefore St. Paul sums up all in these words: "Christ crucified," "Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" and sometimes merely in "the cross of Christ;" yea, in that one word "the cross."

When the gospel was first published to fallen man, it was in words to this effect: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." But how bruise the serpent's head? It was not then a proper time to declare in express language, but sacrifices were instituted to show how, by way of emblematical representation, as they were types and shadows of the great atonement. Abel sacrificed, Noah sacrificed, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offered sacrifice; and almost the whole external worship of God, under the Mosaic dispensation, which was designed as an introduction to Christianity, consisted in offering sacrifice; and without shedding of blood there was no remission. And the meaning of all this was made plain, when the Son of God became incarnate, that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

How had the devil the power of death? It was the devil's original design to be the death and destruction of all the human race, perhaps that, in the ruin of God's new-made world, he might be revenged for his expulsion out of heaven. He thought that if they sinned, they must inevitably die, according to the express declaration of God's law. He had lately felt the force of the divine law he was under. He sinned, and he was banished from the celestial regions, down to eternal woe and endless despair. He tempted man to sin, that he might be joined in the same state. For if God will be so severe as to kill and damn for the first offence, Satan's practice seemed to declare, that he could wish God might have nothing else to do among all his subjects. So that when a fallen world was doomed to death, it was the very thing Satan would have. And so death became, as it were, his servant. It served his will, it accomplished his scheme, and answered his ends, as though it had been in his power. God seemed obliged in honor to put his law in execution; but in doing it, he would gratify the devil. the greatest enemy to God, to law, and to the

whole system. This was Satan's malicious, crafty scheme, and thus perhaps was he ready to say, "If law is put in execution, man must die; and God will be disappointed of the glory of his new creation, and I shall triumph. If law is vacated and set aside in favor of rebel man, no more let the Almighty Monarch pretend to impartial justice. As well might law have been set aside in my case: my exclusion from heaven was an arbitrary act; if arbitrary, then tyrannical. And what care I for the wrath of an angry tyrant? Hell will be no longer hell to me." Wherefore there was a peculiar propriety in the first promise being delivered to man in the form of a threatening to Satan. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." For it was a chief design of infinite wisdom to disconcert the devil's scheme, break up his plan, and so kill the old serpent in a way suited to his own nature. And what can excruciate him more, and put him to greater torment, than to see law honored, and man saved, both at once; and an eternal end put to his influence, in a way most honorable to God, and advantageous to the system; whilst himself and all his obstinate adherents are doomed to everlasting fire?

But how can law be honored, and man saved, both at once? For this end Christ became incarnate, and placed himself in our room and stead, that through death he might destroy the devil, break up his scheme, set at liberty his guilty, trembling captives, who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage. For he was made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law; set forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that God might be, and appear to be, just, while he justifies the sinner; and so the law be magnified and made honorable, while the sinner is saved; death turned into a blessing, and be succeeded by a glorious resurrection and a blessed immortality.

And thus the design of Christ's death was to secure the honor of the divine government, and open a way for the honorable exercise of his grace in the salvation of sinners; and this is so plainly held forth in the whole of divine revelation, that it is, at least in words, generally agreed to by almost all parties, however differently they profess to think in many other points. In words, I say; for if in reality it was agreed to, all parties would soon agree in every other important article of the Christian faith.

It is true, there are some divines who seem to think that God might arbitrarily have set aside his law in favor of fallen man; and that even his own perfections obliged him to it; and to pardon and receive to favor his sinful creatures upon

their repentance, had there never been a Mediator or an atonement. Repentance and reformation was all the atonement they could make, and all that God could demand. "I affirm," says one, "it is an article of natural religion, that forgiveness does certainly follow repentance. If God be a merciful and benign being, he will accept the payment we are able to make; and not insist on impossible demands with his frail, bankrupt creatures." *

But little do such divines think how their confident affirmations are really subversive of the whole of Christianity; for, "if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law." If it had been "an article of natural religion" that any doings of ours could have in reason entitled us to the divine favor, verily God would have proceeded with mankind upon the principles of natural religion, and not needlessly have been at such infinite expense as the sacrifice of his Son; for if, upon the principles of natural religion, sinful man could obtain the favor of God, the death of Christ was unnecessary. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

As this is St. Paul's reasoning, who certainly had a right understanding of Christianity, so it not only confutes such affirmations as that just mentioned, which are cited and improved by deistical writers † in the cause of infidelity; but also, at the same time, these words of the apostle precisely determine what it was that rendered the death of Christ necessary, in order to the justification and salvation of sinners. "The law was weak through the flesh," that is, through our depravity; and although originally ordained to give life, (Rom. vii. 10,) was now unable to do it. For the law required perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." But all have sinned, and so the whole world stand guilty before God, according to the law, which all the world are under. (Rom. iii. 9, 19.) This law, therefore, which was ordained to life, can now be only unto death. (Rom. vii. 10.) And there is no other law; so there is no law which can give life. This rendered the obedience and atonement of Christ absolutely necessary in order to prevent the universal ruin of the human race; for the law, being holy, just, and good, must not be set aside. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law must fail; it must be

* Mr. Nye, Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 85, 86.
† Tindal, p. 354.

all fulfilled. (Matt. v. 17, 18.) Could men have answered the demands of the law, Christ's obedience and death had been needless; for if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain. So that this was the end of Christ's death, and that, but for which he never would have died, his death being needless and in vain on any other account, according to St. Paul.

It is true, the divine and holy manner in which he went through his sufferings, exhibits a glorious example for all his disciples to follow, when they are called to go through sufferings in his cause. But as there would be no virtue in exposing ourselves to death when not called to it, so there could be no virtue in going through death in ever so heroic a manner, in such a case. Rather it might be judged, that we fling away our lives, not only imprudently, but very sinfully. And our example would be so far from deserving to be admired and imitated, that it ought to be publicly condemned; to the end that others might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. If, therefore, our Savior laid down his life, when there was no need of it, there was no virtue in his conduct, nothing commendable in his example, nor worthy of imitation; but the whole was a scene of deliberate wickedness. But thus it is written, and thus the all-wise God, whose judgment is always according to truth, viewed the affair, namely, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

To say, "that although righteousness does come by the law, yet Christ did not die in vain, as his death was needful to seal his testimony to the truth, as other martyrs have done," is not only expressly to contradict the Holy Ghost, (Gal. xi. 21,) but is even an affront to common sense. Other martyrs were sinners, and deserved to die; for death is the wages of sin: but he was innocent and holy to perfection. And had he called for twelve legions of angels, and out of his enemies' hands ascended to heaven in visible glory, it had been a sufficient attestation to the truths he taught, had he only been a prophet sent from God to republish the law of nature. But how then should the Scriptures have been fulfilled, which had marked him out for a sacrifice of atonement, "to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness?" For he was, according to the plan laid in heaven, intimated in the sacred writings, to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was to be upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. For we all like sheep had gone astray, and the Lord had laid on him the iniquities of us all. (Isa. liii.) On this design, the Son of God became

incarnate, and for this purpose he died; and had it not been for this, the death of an incarnate God had been entirely needless; for thus Heaven has declared, "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Well, therefore, might the holy apostle sum up the whole of the glorious gospel in one word — "We preach Christ crucified." For indeed this was in effect the whole of the good and glorious news they had to proclaim to a guilty world. It was long before decreed in heaven that he should die; it was the determinate counsel of God, from the beginning, that through death he should destroy the devil, break up his scheme, and thoroughly bruise his head. And for this, in the fulness of time, he left his Father's bosom; for this he became flesh; and for this he entered upon his public ministry, characterized by John the Baptist, at that juncture, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" the true antitype of all the Jewish sacrifices. For this he called the twelve from their nets, that they might be his witnesses to all nations. For this he went up to Jerusalem, knowing what should befall him. "And how am I straitened," said he, "till it be accomplished!" For this he went into the garden, knowing that his enemies would find him there; and in a view of the absolute necessity of his death for the salvation of sinners, he said to his Father, "Thy will be done;" and then voluntarily resigned himself up into his enemies' hand, when he could have struck them dead, or had twelve legions of angels to have guarded him from their malice. "I lay down my life for the sheep. This commandment have I received from my Father." For him did God the Father set forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just. And for this the Father loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep. And to testify his love and well-pleasedness in the sight of the whole intellectual system, he raised him from the dead, set him at his own right hand in heaven, declared himself ready to be reconciled, and ordered repentance and remission of sins to be preached to all nations in his name. Nay, all power in heaven and earth is committed into his hands, that he might reign till all his enemies are put under his feet, and Satan's whole scheme completely disappointed. For as he loved righteousness and hated iniquity with such fervor, as moved him to interpose and die in this cause, to discountenance sin, and magnify the divine law, bring glory to God, salvation to men, and so destroy the devil; wherefore God hath "anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" "given him a name above every name;" and decreed, that "he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" that is,

see as much glory to God, and benefit to the creature, result from his death on the cross, as his soul desires.

Was his love to God, zeal for his glory, and for the honor of his government, and compassion to lost sinners, so great, as to bring him from his Father's bosom, worshipped by all the heavenly host, to hang naked, tortured, insulted on the cross, and there expire in the utmost agonies? As great glory to God, as great honor to his law, as great salvation to lost sinners shall result herefrom, as to be equal to his love, and zeal, and pity, infinite as they were. For he shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. He shall see the fruit of his labors till he says, "It is enough." But what can be enough in the eyes of such a one? What can satisfy a heart like his, whose regard to the honor of God and of his law, and to the welfare of lost sinners, was so infinitely great? "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive!" But in the midst of all this, we have the highest possible assurance of his sincerity in saying, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" for these the Father gave him: they were the sheep he loved, and laid down his life for; the joy set before him, for whose salvation he endured the cross and despised the shame; these are his seed, the travail of his soul, for whom he was smitten of God, and in whose stead he became a curse, to redeem them from the curse, and that the blessing of Abraham might come upon them.

Thus this is the sum and substance of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. We preach Christ crucified: this was the glorious and joyful news the apostles proclaimed to a revolted, guilty world. And if to the Jews Christ crucified was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet to them who were called, Christ crucified was "the power of God and the wisdom of God." But this leads us to take a view of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

SECTION II.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

THE gospel is denominated "the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ;" and its glory is represented to be divine glory; for it is called "the glory of God," and "the glory of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 6.) The law, as a ministration of death and

condemnation, is said to be glorious; but the gospel exceeds in glory, because we have in the gospel a more full and bright manifestation of the glory of the divine nature. The glory of both is of the same nature, divine glory; but in the gospel it shines with greater brightness. Now, the glory of the divine nature consists in infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. These perfections are the beauty of the Divinity. But how are they manifested in the gospel? It is true, the ends proposed in the gospel are very glorious, to bring glory to God, salvation to men, and destruction to Satan's cause; but how are the means glorious? Christ crucified. How are the divine perfections manifested in bringing about these ends by the incarnation and death of the Son of God? This has been a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek; and yet is affirmed to be in an eminent and peculiar manner the wisdom of God. But how and wherein does the wisdom of God appear in the death of his Son? This is the point to which we are now carefully to attend.

It has been observed that the death of Christ was designed to answer the demands of the law in our stead. The law had said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But, by the deeds of this law, no flesh can be justified in the sight of God; for by it all stand condemned as sinners. Therefore Christ was made a curse to redeem us from its curse; not because it was a bad law, and so the fault in the lawgiver; but because the law was holy, just, and good, and mankind, without excuse, guilty before God, as much to blame as the curse of the law imported. He was set forth to be a propitiation to declare God's righteousness; and so, in his death, he "magnified the law and made it honorable."

But there is no wisdom in doing honor to that which is not worthy of honor. And, therefore, if the divine law was not holy, just, and good, and did not in its own nature deserve to be magnified and made honorable at such an infinite expense as the blood of the Son of God, how was it wise in God to give his Son to die for this purpose? And if it was not wise, how was the divine conduct in this affair in any respect God-like and glorious? If it was not wise, it was unwise. It must be unwise to be at such infinite expense, if the nature of the case did not call for it, if the law did not deserve such honor. And if there was no need of such an atonement in order to our pardon and salvation, it was no act of kindness to us. We might have been saved as well without. And if the law was in its own nature too severe, it could not be a holy or a just act

in God to require such an atonement in order to our pardon and salvation; but the contrary.

It must, therefore, be laid down as a fundamental maxim, that the divine law, in its full extent, and with all its curses, and that with respect not only to Adam in innocency, but also to all his sinful race, in whose stead Christ has borne its curse, is really, in itself, and in the eyes of God, holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, worthy of having its honor secured by the blood of the Son of God. For there can be no glory in the death of Christ, if the law be not glorious: rather it must have been contrary to all the divine perfections for God to have given his Son to die, to do honor to that which deserved no honor. And the gospel which brings us the news, instead of revealing the glory of God, would bring to light an affair infinitely and everlastingly to his dishonor. For how must it appear in the eyes of all holy beings, if the law was good only with respect to Adam before the fall, but not with respect to him or his posterity since, that Christ should be made a curse, to redeem not only Adam, but to redeem us from the curse; that Christ should die to make atonement not only for the one offence of Adam, — his first sin, — but the many offences of Adam and of his sinful race; even for every breach of that law, which curseth every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them! If the law had not been, in its full extent, holy, just, and good, with respect to a fallen world, surely a being of perfect rectitude and infinite goodness must have disannulled it, and not subjected his own Son, in our stead, to bear the curse.

If, indeed, we are a fallen, sinful, guilty world, — and if we are not, we did not need the Son of God to die in our behalf, — it is not at all strange if there should be many and great prejudices in our hearts against the divine law, which we have broke, and by which we stand condemned, blinding our minds to its reasonableness and excellency, and tempting us to think it far from being holy, just, and good. Nor is it at all strange if Satan, who was banished from heaven by a like law, and is an avowed enemy to God and to his government, should desire to strengthen our prejudices against the divine law, and do all in his power to blind our minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine in our hearts. But only let our hearts be divested of prejudices, and in a disposition to approve that which is really excellent, and we cannot fail to discern the reasonableness and beauty of the divine law. For, if God is an absolutely perfect being, — and to deny that he is, is downright atheism — he must be infinitely glorious and

amiable in himself; and, therefore, he must be infinitely worthy of that supreme love and honor, from all the children of men, which the law requires. And infinite worthiness lays a foundation for infinite obligation; and infinite obligation to love and honor God supremely will render us infinitely to blame if we do not; and infinite blame deserves infinite punishment: exactly as the divine law, that perfect rule of right, has stated the case. And the more disinclined we be to love God, the more aggravated is our guilt; and if our inclination to love God with all our hearts is what it ought to be, there can be no difficulty in the way. So that there is no consistent medium between atheism and an acknowledgment that the divine law is holy, just, and good.*

And further, if this absolutely perfect, infinitely glorious being, who is by nature God, is the Creator and Preserver of all things; if he brought all things out of nothing into being, and holds up all things in being every moment; then all things are

* If God is not an absolutely perfect being, in himself infinitely glorious and amiable, the divine law, which requires us to love him with all our hearts on pain of eternal death, can never be made out to be holy, just, and good. And if the law is not holy, just, and good, the wisdom of God in the death of his Son can never be vindicated. The gospel must be given up. He, then, who denies the infinite amiableness of the Deity, as he is in himself, saps the whole Scripture scheme at the foundation. He must be an infidel; or, if he pretends to believe Christianity, he must hold to a scheme full of inconsistency. We have an instance of this in Mr. Cudworth. He denies the infinite amiableness of the Deity, as he is in himself; and maintains that there is "no loveliness conceivable" in him, but what results from his being our friend, "disposed to make us happy." When, therefore, we had made him our enemy by sin, he maintains that there was no loveliness to be seen in him; yea, that, let our hearts be ever so right, it was "utterly impossible" to love him; even inconsistent with our original constitution as reasonable creatures. The divine law, surely, then, could not in reason be obligatory on a fallen world: it became a bad law, not fit for us to be under, as soon as ever we broke it; which to say, he owns, is subversive of Christianity. What, then, shall we say? To say that the law is "holy, just, and good," when it requires of us what is "inconsistent with the original constitution of reasonable creatures," is the most glaring, shocking self-contradiction. But into this Mr. Cudworth is necessarily driven, by his denying God to be, in himself, an infinitely amiable Being. For if God is not a lovely Being, when we have made him our enemy by sin; yea, if his very displeasure against us as sinners, is not a lovely thing, he never can be loved by us. If to hate and punish sin, is in God an unamiable thing, there is no beauty at all in his character, as will be proved in the sequel. If Mr. Cudworth will reconsider his own scheme, and, with a sedate, impartial mind, look to the bottom of things, he will find himself obliged to alter his notion of God, or give up Christianity. And if he should grant that God is, in himself, infinitely amiable, all his objections against my Dialogues must drop of course. For, as soon as the sinner's eyes are, in regeneration, opened to see things as they be, God will appear to be infinitely amiable; and then every consequence will follow, which, I say, does follow. He was sensible of this; and so had no way left but to deny that God is, in himself, infinitely amiable; in which he has destroyed the only foundation on which a consistent scheme of religion can be built, and obliged himself to run into inconsistence and self-contradiction. See Mr. Cudworth's Further Defence, p. 221, 226.

absolutely and entirely his, by an original, independent right. And, if all things are his, he has a natural right of government over all; and it becomes him to take the throne, and be king in his own world. Supreme authority naturally belongs to him, exactly as the divine law supposes.

When, therefore, he takes the throne, assumes the character of moral Governor, requires all the human race to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and with all their mind, on pain of his displeasure, to be testified in their being eternally forsaken of God and given up to ruin, he does what perfectly becomes him. His conduct is founded in the highest reason; for he is by nature God and the original Lord of all things.

And had all the human kind, in mutual love and perfect harmony among themselves, (as also the divine law requires,) joined, with one heart and with one soul, in a supreme love to the supreme beauty, and in an entire, cordial, joyful subjection to their Creator and supreme Lord, and absolutely perfect Sovereign; and continued universally obedient to all the dictates of his will, which must forever have been infinitely wise; they might, as one united, harmonious, happy family, have always dwelt under the shadow of his wings, enjoyed his favor, his smiles, his blessing, and made eternal progress in all divine improvements, rejoicing ever before him, to his honor, and infinitely to their own advantage. And all this was but the very thing the divine law was in its own nature calculated to bring them to; for the law was ordained to life. Wherefore the law was holy, just, and good; and a glorious expression of the holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, the very image of the Deity. And therefore it was worthy to be kept in honor by God's own Son.

Besides, when in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and all things that are in heaven and in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, he then created all things for himself, with a view to begin a moral kingdom, comprehending all holy intelligences, and to set up a moral government to last forever and ever; the welfare of which must consist in, and result from, the knowledge and love of God, and mutual love and harmony under his perfect government; that is, in such tempers, employments, and enjoyments as the divine law was calculated to train them up unto. And, as this holy kingdom was so large, comprehending all holy intelligences; and of such great duration, to last forever and

ever; its interest and welfare was, strictly speaking, of infinite value. It was, therefore, of infinite importance, not only as to the honor of God, but also as to the good of his great and eternal kingdom, that the honor and authority of that law should be maintained inviolate, which secured the rights and prerogatives of the Godhead, and the infinitely valuable privileges of all his subjects.

To break this law, in its native tendency, was to dethrone God and disband his empire, to introduce universal rebellion, discord, and ruin, into God's eternal kingdom; and had the first rebel had sufficient power and influence on his side, he would actually have dethroned God and disbanded his empire, introduced universal rebellion, discord, and ruin, into God's eternal kingdom. Yea, this is the native tendency of every sin, and the heart of every sinner, as I have largely shown in another place.* Therefore, to crush rebellion; to brand sin with eternal infamy; to establish the divine authority; to maintain the divine law in all its honors, were things of infinite importance, not only to the honor of God, but also to the welfare of his great and eternal kingdom.

Therefore, when Satan and his adherents first began rebellion in heaven, — although dear to God before their fall, yet love to being in general, love to God and to the created system, love to law, to virtue, to order, and harmony, awakened infinite wrath in the Almighty against the rebels; excommunicated them from the church of the first-born above; banished them from that holy society, and doomed them to eternal darkness and woe; that sin might be pictured in all its infinite horrors in the hearts of all his loyal subjects above, that the infection might never spread in that world, but the honor of his authority, law, and government, be more firmly established than ever, to the glory of his name, and to the everlasting interest of his great and eternal kingdom. And all heaven had reason to cry, "Amen, hallelujah! Just and righteous are thy ways, Lord God Almighty."

And if, after this, rebellion breaks out in another part of God's dominions, is there less, nay, is there not rather greater reason that sin should be equally discountenanced? or, rather, that some more effectual method than ever should be entered upon to establish the divine authority, and secure the honor of the divine government? Or must the divine law now be given up in favor of rebel man, even as the devil made our first parents believe it would, when he tempted them to revolt,

* Sermon on the great Evil of Sin.

saying, "Ye shall not surely die." Let us stop and think a moment what would be the import of giving up the law in this case.

The law supposed that God was really by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious Being, as it required us to consider and treat him as such. Our revolt was a practical declaration, that he was not by nature God, nor worthy to be glorified as God. To give up the law in favor of his rebellious creature, must therefore be the same, in effect, as for God to give up his own divinity, and ungod himself in the sight of all his dominions, to gratify a rebel.

Again, the law also supposed, that as God was the Creator, Lord, and owner of the universe, and by nature God; so he was possessed of supreme authority, an authority infinitely binding, and infinitely worthy to be revered. To give up the law, therefore, was in effect the same as to resign his authority in favor of those who had despised it, give a quitclaim of the universe, and tolerate a general revolt. As if God should say, "The universe is not mine, nor have I any authority over it; angels, men, and devils, are all at liberty; there is no king, and so every one may do what is right in his own eyes." For to hold his authority merely on the footing of the voluntary loyalty of his subjects, so that whenever any revolt, they are at liberty; no longer obliged to obey; to do this only in one instance, is in effect to relinquish all claim to authority over any, as founded in his Godhead and Lordship; which is, in effect, the same as quit his claim to his own divinity and to his own world, to gratify those who would gladly ungod him and dethrone him. In a word, for God to give up the law, which requires us to love and obey him with all our hearts, is practically to declare to his rebellious creatures, "Your disaffection to my character, and rebellion against my authority, is no crime; for I am not worthy to be loved and obeyed with all your hearts; for I am not by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, your Creator, sovereign Lord and King, as in my law I claimed to be."

And to alter and abate the law, and bring it down to the taste and good liking of an apostate world, who were enemies to God and his government, enemies to the order and harmony of the universe, must be much the same as for God to give up his law and authority entirely. For he must quit his supremacy, give up the rights and honors of the Godhead, justify their revolt, turn to be on their side, turn enemy to God, and to his law, and employ his infinite wisdom and almighty power to promote the schemes they have laid in consequence of their

revolt; schemes suited to the taste of apostate creatures. And thus they must become as gods, as Satan said, and the Almighty become their true and faithful servant; for nothing short of this would suit an apostate world. But this is even worse than merely to quit his claim to the universe, and resign his government over it; as it would be bad for King George to quit his throne for the Pretender, and fly his country; but worse to become the Pretender's servant, and be obliged to employ all his power to promote the Pretender's interest.

And if among God's revolted subjects any of the rebels should imagine that what the devil said was true, "Ye shall not surely die;" if any should persuade themselves, that it never was in God's heart to care at all for his own honor, or for the honor of his law and government, or to punish any of his creatures for despising the Lord, and despising the commandments of the Lord; or ever to inflict any pain upon any of his subjects, unless merely for their benefit; in a word, if any should imagine, that it never was in God's heart to regard or aim at any thing but simply the good of his creatures, be they virtuous or vicious; and believing God to be thus altogether according to their own hearts, they are well pleased with his character; and so verily think that they are not enemies to God, in a state of rebellion, worthy of eternal death; and consequently, that they do not need a pardon, much less an atonement of infinite value, to procure a pardon. All this is so far from arguing an atonement to be needless, that it rather serves to discover the absolute necessity of one; that God might give no occasion for these false and blasphemous notions of him and his government, universally to prevail, infinitely to the dishonor of God, and entirely to the subversion of his authority, while he is on designs of mercy towards a fallen world.

It is manifest from the whole tenor of the divine conduct, from the foundation of the world, that he looked upon it as of the highest importance, that the intellectual system should know that the Deity is infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience, and that the evil of disaffection and rebellion against the divine majesty, is infinitely great, and worthy of an infinite punishment; as he is in fact by nature God, and Lord supreme. It therefore appeared, in the eyes of God, a glorious act, and infinitely becoming the wise Father of the universe, originally to suspend the everlasting welfare of his new-made, innocent creatures, on condition of their supreme love to the Deity, to be manifested by a universal obedience to his will. And he judged it wise and righteous in him, as moral Governor of the world, to banish the first rebels from his

presence into everlasting destruction. And in his eyes it was a most glorious display of all his perfections, when man had fallen, not to pardon one of all the race without a mediator of infinite dignity, and an atonement of infinite value; nay, rather to part with his own Son from his bosom, and deliver him up to bear the curse in our stead, and set him forth to be a propitiation to declare his righteousness, and let the whole system see his full resolution to punish sin, and maintain the honor of his law and government. And in this view, Christ crucified is the wisdom of God; a most glorious means to accomplish the most glorious ends; and in this primarily consists the glory of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was a glorious display of the holiness of the great Governor of the world, to appoint his own Son to die a sacrifice of atonement, as hereby his infinite regard to his own honor, and infinite hatred of sin, was set in the strongest light; and it was a glorious display of the divine justice, as hereby it appeared that he was unchangeably determined to punish sin according to its desert, and execute the curse of his righteous law, although his own dear Son, standing in the room of a guilty world, was the person to be made a curse.

And it was a glorious display of divine goodness; for, if the divine law was so holy, just, and good, so exactly in the image of the Deity, as to be worthy of all this honor; then, to a demonstration, God was wholly right, and our disaffection and rebellion entirely groundless; yea, infinitely criminal; and therefore mankind were not pitied as having been too severely dealt with. And, while the death of Christ declares the justice of the law and the righteousness of God in our condemnation, the gift of Christ to die in our stead appears to be an act of grace infinitely great and absolutely free.

And, while the Son of God stands clothed in human nature, and voluntarily appears as our representative, to die in our stead, as our second Adam, God appears to be a God of truth; for the criminal dies virtually in his surety. And thus the law is honored, sin discountenanced, the sinner saved, grace glorified, and Satan disappointed, all at once. And thus all the divine perfections are displayed on the cross of Christ; and thus the gospel is a glorious gospel. But all this only on supposition the law was a glorious law.

For, let it once be supposed, that the divine law, which required sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation of all mankind, is in its own nature too severe, and it will inevitably follow, — Heaven forbid the blasphemy! — that Christ, in bearing the curse of this law in our stead, died a sacrifice to

tyranny; and so the gospel, instead of being a glorious gospel, a glorious display of the wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, exhibits to view the most shocking scene that can possibly be conceived of — foolishness in the abstract.

But if the law was holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, and worthy to be so magnified and made honorable, and if the law be thus viewed and considered, at once the atonement of Christ becomes "the wisdom of God and the power of God," the wisest and the most effectual method to answer the most glorious ends. And thus the cross of Christ will appear foolishness or wisdom, according to the light in which we view it; as it is written, (1 Cor. i. 23, 24,) "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Thus we have taken a general view of the nature and glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the way being thus prepared, we proceed to take things into a more particular consideration in the following sections.

SECTION III.

THE DIVINE LAW HOLY, JUST, AND GOOD, A GLORIOUS LAW, ANTECEDENT TO A CONSIDERATION OF THE GIFT OF CHRIST, AND THE WORK OF REDEMPTION BY HIM.

If the moral character of the Deity, which consists in holiness, justice, and goodness, is glorious and amiable; and if the divine law is, after his own image, a transcript of his nature, holy, just, and good, it must be glorious and amiable too. And that the divine law is holy, just, and good, the apostle Paul expressly affirms. (Rom. vii. 12.)

Would we know what law the apostle speaks of in that verse, let us read through that Epistle, and his Epistle to the Galatians, in which he is speaking of the same law, and we shall find these things said of it. It is that law which the Jews had written in a book, and the Gentiles written in their consciences. It "revealed the wrath of God, from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." By this law is the knowledge of sin. It requires us to continue in all things in it to do them. It promises that the man that doth

the things contained in it shall live ; but curses every one that continueth not in all things. And, according to it, both Jews and Greeks are under sin ; every mouth is stopped, and the whole world stand guilty before God, each one without excuse. (Rom. i. 18, 21 ; ii. 14 ; iii. 9, 20 ; vii. 7, 12 ; x. 5. Gal. iii. 10, 12.) And, from the whole tenor of divine revelation, we learn that it requires us to love God with all our heart, and yield a perfect and persevering obedience to his will, on pain of eternal death.

That this law, with respect to mankind in their present state, is holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ and the work of redemption by him, is certain from two indisputable facts.

First Fact. — That all mankind, in their natural state, are by God, the Judge of all the earth, considered as under it, and held bound by it. That this is the case, is plain ; for we cannot be guilty before God for the breach of a law, which in his sight we are not under. But for the breach of this law, the whole world stand guilty before God ; therefore the whole world, in the sight of God, are under the law. (Rom. iii. 19.) No man can be entitled to life by obeying a law which he is not under. But whosoever obeys this law is expressly entitled to life ; therefore every man is under it. (Rom. x. 5.) No man is liable in the sight of God to the curse or penalty of a law which he is not held bound by. But God declares that every Christless sinner is actually under the curse of the law ; therefore every Christless sinner is held bound by it. (Gal. iii. 10. John iii. 18, 36.) Thus the fact is plain, that all mankind, in their natural state, are, by God, the Judge of all the earth, considered as under it, and held bound by it. But from the absolute perfection of the divine nature, we may be certain that the Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. It is inconsistent with the holiness, justice, and goodness of his nature, and therefore morally impossible he should hold his creatures bound by a law, unless it were holy, just, and good. This law is, therefore, holy, just, and good.

Second Fact. — That God has given his own Son to be made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of this law. But it had been inconsistent with every one of the divine perfections to have given his Son to be made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of a law, which in justice we could not have been held bound by, if Christ had never died.

Whoever will think of this, and thoroughly weigh it in his mind, will feel himself obliged either to acknowledge the law to be holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the

gift of Christ, or to give up law and gospel both together; for God's giving his Son to die, to redeem us from the curse of the law, is the greatest proof of its goodness which could possibly have been given by the Father or Son. The fact must be denied, therefore, or the consequence must be granted. We must say that Christ was not made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law, or we must grant the law was good; for, to say that God the Father gave his Son to be made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of a bad law, is worse than infidelity; nay, worse than downright atheism. For, to believe that God is an almighty tyrant, that would put his creatures under an unrighteous law, and then appoint his Son to bear its curse in their room, is worse than to believe there is no God at all. The goodness of the divine law must be granted, therefore, or we shall find nowhere to stop on this side infidelity. But I mean, at present, to reason only with those who grant the Scriptures to be the word of God. And to these, I presume, the argument must be conclusive.

1. If the divine law is holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and work of redemption by him, then the divine law is a glorious and amiable law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and work of redemption by him. For, if holiness, justice, and goodness are glorious and amiable attributes, as they are in God, the original, then they are glorious and amiable attributes, as they are in the divine law, which is his image, and a transcript of his nature. If the original is lovely, the image is lovely also; to say otherwise, plainly implies a contradiction. Besides, if holiness, justice, and goodness are not glorious and amiable properties, then God himself is not a glorious and amiable being. And if God is not a glorious and amiable being, he ought not to be viewed and loved as such; to say which, is to overthrow natural and revealed religion both at once. There is no consistent medium, therefore, between renouncing all religion and granting the divine law to be glorious and amiable, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and work of redemption by him.

2. But if the divine law is a holy, just, good, and glorious law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, then it must of necessity appear such, to every one whose eyes are opened, to see it as it is; that is, to every one that is not spiritually blind. For if it is in fact a glorious law in itself, it must appear so to every one who sees it as it is; and it must begin to appear so as soon as it begins to be seen as it is; and he that does not so much as begin to see the divine law as it is,

is evidently altogether spiritually blind. God has not as yet begun to open his eyes, but the vail is still all over his heart, and enmity to God and his law has full possession of his soul.*

To say, that "it is impossible the law should appear glorious to me, before I believe myself delivered from its curse," is either to say, that the law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, was not a glorious law, or else, that a man whose eyes are opened cannot possibly see it to be what it is. But if it was not a glorious law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, it is certain Christ never would have been given to redeem us from its curse; and if men do not see it to be what it is, it is certain they are blind; for this is the very thing that is meant by blindness in this case.

The truth is, those who view the law as being glorious, only under the notion they are, or shall be, delivered from its curse, are as blind to its real beauty as the most stupid sinner in the world. It is just as if a man should pretend to love a tyrant, merely because he is dead. And although they may be ravished to think Christ died for them, yet the real purport of his death never once came into their view. And had the law in reality been no otherwise than it appears to them, Christ never had died to redeem any man from its curse. For had it not been good and glorious, antecedent to his interposition, he never would have interposed. For he did not die, because the law was bad, to rescue us from its unrighteous curse and pacify our angry minds; but he died because it was good; to do it honor, and answer its demands in our stead, to the end that God, consistently with his honor, might by his Holy Spirit, take the vail from our hearts, and bring us to see the glory of his law, and

* These four points must be insisted on: 1st. That the divine law is holy, just, good, and glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ. 2d. That it is seen to be such by every enlightened soul. 3d. That in this view Christ crucified is seen to be the wisdom of God. 4th. That without this view, the wisdom of God in the death of his Son cannot be seen. But whether the glory of the law is seen, in order of time, before the glory of the atonement, need not be insisted on. If things are seen in their true nature, and in their true arrangement, it matters not whether they come into view gradually or instantaneously. They may, in some instances, come into view gradually, and very distinctly; and in some, as it were, instantaneously, and less distinctly. Some may have a greater degree of spiritual light at first, and others a less degree. Some may have a distinct remembrance of their views and exercises, and others not. It matters not as to these things; if men do but know, and love, and obey the truth in sincerity, they are Christians. But if the truth is hated and opposed, and errors substituted in its room; if the divine law be denied to be glorious; if it fills me with hatred and heart-risings; if my heart-risings are allayed merely in a belief that I am delivered from the curse; if this belief is the only ground of my love and joy, and of all my religion, I am not a Christian; I am an Antinomian; an enemy to the divine law, and to the cross of Christ.

heartily repent of all our hard thoughts of God and of his government, and in this way be forgiven simply on Christ's account, and through faith in his blood; and this is that repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, which St. Paul preached to the world.

He who never viewed the divine law as glorious and worthy to be magnified and made honorable, never once understood the design of Christ's mediation, or the purport of his death, or the nature of his righteousness and atonement, or saw the glory of the gospel, or indeed truly knows any thing about the way of salvation through his blood; as will be proved in the sequel.

Objection. "To view the law as glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the gospel, implies, that it appears a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert, with application to myself; but this is inconsistent with that principle of self-preservation originally implanted in human nature when innocent; and so in its own nature is impossible; and therefore cannot be a duty. And therefore, to be blind to the beauty of the divine law, thus viewed, cannot be of a criminal nature; nor can I be obliged to look upon the law as glorious, only in consequence of the grace of the gospel."

Answer 1. This objection, if there be any weight in it, is subversive of all religion, natural and revealed, in heaven and on earth. For a disposition to punish sin according to its desert, is an essential part of that character of God which is exhibited in law and gospel, and in the whole of the divine conduct, from the expulsion of the sinning angels out of heaven, down to the last sentence which will be pronounced on the wicked at the day of judgment. And if, with application to myself, this character does not appear glorious, for the very same reason it cannot appear glorious to me, with application to any other being, if my heart is as it ought to be. For I ought to love my neighbor as myself; and my neighbor's happiness is worth as much as my own, and his eternal misery as dreadful a thing as mine would be. Therefore, if it is inconsistent with that love I owe to myself, to view the divine law as glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the gospel, it is also inconsistent with that love I owe to my neighbor. The moment, therefore, the sinning angels were doomed to eternal misery, it behoved all the angelic world, on this hypothesis, to revolt. Nor could any thing ever reconcile them to the Deity, but his delivering Satan and his associates from the curse. And the moment God told Adam he should die if he sinned, it behoved him to look upon God as a hateful being, for making such an unmerciful law; and had he been

of the same temper we are naturally of, it would have appeared to him impossible to love that character of the Deity, which was exhibited to his view in this law. And unless God does, after the day of judgment, reverse the final sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," it will behove angels and saints, who ought to love their neighbors as themselves, forever to look upon God as a hateful being, while they view the damned, their fellow-creatures, tormented by him in the lake of fire and brimstone forever and ever. If, therefore, all beings in the intellectual system felt, as the objector appears to do, all would join with him in enmity to the divine character, through heaven, earth, and hell.

To say, in this case, "If I am elected, redeemed, pardoned, and finally made eternally happy, I can love God, although others are damned, who deserve it no more than I do," is to declare, that "although I hate the character of the Deity, and care not what becomes of my fellow-creatures, yet as I love myself, if I am happy, I am content;" which is really to declare myself destitute of all godliness and humanity, and under the entire government of self-love. But, —

2. The objection is founded on an hypothesis which is contrary to plain fact, namely, that it is inconsistent with that love which created intelligences owe to themselves, to view it as a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert. For, 1st. It in fact appeared a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert, to the angels that stood, that very moment Satan was driven out of heaven down into an eternal hell, and that with application to themselves. For there was not one of them but was ready to say from the bottom of his heart, "It is a glorious act in God to punish those rebels as he has done." And it would have been as glorious an act in God to have punished me in like sort, had I joined in their rebellion. 2d. It in fact appeared to Adam, before the grace of the gospel was revealed, that it would be a glorious thing in God to punish him according to law, if he should sin; for otherwise the character of God exhibited to his view in the law he was under, had not appeared glorious in his eyes. 3d. It will, in fact, appear, at the day of judgment, a glorious thing in God to punish the wicked according to their desert, to all holy beings, and that in perfect consistence with the highest exercises of the purest benevolence. Besides, —

3. If it is not a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert, there is no glory in the cross of Christ, in which sin was punished according to its desert, in the sinner's representative, the Son of God incarnate. Nay, —

4. If the law does not appear glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the gospel, the grace of the gospel cannot be seen. For the relief granted to us in the gospel is of grace, of mere pure grace, simply on this ground, that the divine law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law in itself. For had it not been such, God had been obliged in justice to have granted us some relief. Besides,—

5. Let a man, blind to the glory of the law, be ever so fully assured in his own mind, that he is delivered from the curse, although it may allay his heart-risings, because he is safe himself, and because he cares little what becomes of others, yet it has in its own nature not the least tendency to reconcile him to the divine law, or to the divine character therein exhibited. If God's pardoning my sins were the grounds of the law's loveliness, then a belief of pardon might convince me of the loveliness of the law. But the law is as lovely if I am punished, as if I am pardoned; for it is what it is. And granting pardon cannot render a bad law good; belief of pardon, therefore, only pacifies the angry mind of a guilty sinner, but has no tendency to convince him that the law is in itself good: witness the Pharisees in our Savior's day, who, notwithstanding their assurance of heaven, were most inveterate enemies to the divine character exhibited in the law, which character was exemplified in the life of Christ. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Witness, also, all open professed Antinomians, of the devoutest sort, who profess the assurance of the love of God, and at the same time appear the most avowed enemies to the divine law. Nay, an assurance of pardon in this case always confirms the native enmity of the heart to the divine law, as is plain from this. Let one of these people be convinced they are in an unpardoned state, and be awakened to some sense of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, and their disposition to murmur and blaspheme will be great in proportion to the greatness of their former confidence. Thus the Israelites, who, after the giving of the law, setting up the tabernacle, and approaching to the borders of the promised land, had their confidence of arriving there raised to its greatest height, now were prepared, on their disappointment, when the spies returned, to feel worse toward God than ever they had done before. Besides, —

6. If, instead of its being owing to the badness of our hearts, it is, in the nature of things, impossible that the law should appear glorious, and the divine character therein exhibited, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the gospel, then contrary to the express words of the apostle, the Gentiles,

who never heard of the gospel, are not without excuse in their want of conformity to the divine law, in their ungodliness, in their not glorifying God as God. (Rom. i. 18, 21.) For they have a very good plea to make for themselves; an excuse that will fully justify them. For, as the objector rightly supposes, that kind of impossibility, which is owing to nothing bad in us, takes away all blame. Therefore every mouth is not stopped, neither doth the whole world stand guilty before God, as to this particular. And thereupon St. Paul's gospel, which is built on this foundation, is overthrown, if this objection is allowed to be of weight. And what is here said of the Gentiles may be equally said of every impenitent sinner, who as yet knows not that he shall be ever the better for the grace of the gospel, in the world to come. According to the objection, it is impossible, and therefore it is not the duty of such to love God; and their not loving him is no crime; and so Christ did not die to make atonement in this case, nor are we to repent, or to ask God to forgive us. All this will follow, if it be no crime for a sinner not to love God and his law, while as yet he knows not but that he shall perish forever.*

7. If we are justifiable in our native dislike to God's law, if we are not to blame for being enemies to the divine character

* To avoid these consequences, a late author, who affirms that the divine law requires what is "utterly impossible;" yea, what implies "love to our own eternal destruction," and so is "inconsistent with our duty, contrary to our original constitution, and to the law of God;" yet at the same time maintains, that this very law is "holy, just, and good," binding on all mankind. By holy, just, and good, he seems to mean precisely the same thing that other people do by unholy, unjust, and cruel; and accordingly he affirms, that "no loveliness conceivable" can be discerned in that character of the Deity, which is exhibited in his law, and that it is "utterly impossible" to love it. However, he also affirms, that all mankind "ought to love it, and are self-condemned if they do not." And that, although it is not owing to the badness in our hearts that we do not; yea, although it is, in its own nature, "utterly impossible, inconsistent with our duty of self-preservation, and love to ourselves," and so, in its own nature, "contrary to our original constitution, and to the law of God." A remarkable scheme of religion this! Query. Can there be any sin, or can we be self-condemned, in not loving a character which has no loveliness in it? Can that law be holy, just, and good, which requires us, on pain of eternal damnation, to do that which is in itself sinful, "contrary to the law of God"? Yea, rather, is not that a wicked law, which requires us to do a wicked thing, to do what is contrary to the law of God? Is not that a tyrannical law, which requires us to do that which is impossible, not through the badness of our hearts, but "utterly impossible," let our hearts be ever so good, "contrary to the original constitution of reasonable creatures"? Would not the Holy One of Israel have been obliged, in honor to himself, to have laid aside such an unreasonable, sinful, wicked, tyrannical law, had there never been a Mediator? Would it not be inconsistent with every perfection of the divine nature to give his Son, to become incarnate by his life and death, to show the greatest respect, and do the greatest honor to such a law? Does not Antinomianism lead directly to infidelity? See Mr. Cudworth's Further Defence of Theron and Aspasio, p. 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227.

therein exhibited, then to be reconciled to this character of God, is no man's duty, and so is no part of religion. A man may be a good man, and yet an enemy to that character of God which is exhibited in the law; yea, perfectly holy, while he perfectly hates it; and so regeneration becomes a needless thing. For there is no need of a new, divine, spiritual principle to be begotten in us, to enable us to love God simply under the notion of a benefactor; for it was our Savior's maxim, "that sinners love those that love them." If the divine character, as exhibited in the divine law, is not to be loved, there is nothing in revealed religion but what we can love without any other principles but those which are natural to us. We therefore, on this hypothesis, are not fallen creatures, nor do we need to be born again. All we need is, a revelation that God loves us, and will make us forever happy. The Redeemer and the Sanctifier may both be left out of the account. So bad a law deserves no honor; and let that be set aside, and God love us, and we shall naturally love him, without any special influence from above. And thus the whole gospel of Jesus Christ is overthrown.

But it is a plain case, that it was not originally the duty of finite intelligences to love themselves in such sort, as to look upon it as an unamiable thing in God to punish them according to their crimes, in case of their revolt. This would suppose, that it was originally their duty to be enemies to God's government. This kind of self-love is peculiar to apostate creatures; and instead of being a duty, is of the nature of sin; instead of being innocent, it is pregnant with enmity against God's true and real character. It ought, therefore, to be called by the proper name which God has given it, a carnal mind; not the least tincture of which belonged to the original constitution of an innocent creature; "for the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." Or, if we would give it another name, we may call it pride. For what is it but pride, for a sinner to think himself so good, and of such vast importance, that God must forfeit his character, and cease to be lovely, if he only punishes him according to his desert? Would it not be accounted pride in a murderer, to think the chief judge must lose his own character, if he pronounces the sentence of death upon him; that is, if he does what, in the eyes of every impartial man, it becomes him to do? And would it not be a full proof of a proud, haughty, impenitent, inimical spirit, in a traitor on the gallows, if, when urged to say, "God save the king," he should reply, "It is impossible for me to wish the king prosperity, so long as I am doomed to die;"

when in reason he ought to take the blame of his ruin wholly to himself? Nor has he any ground to dislike his king and country, or be the less benevolent toward them because he is punished according to his desert; rather he ought to go out of the world, saying, "Let all his subjects love and obey their most gracious Sovereign, although I receive my just desert, and am hanged for my treason." For his king is as worthy of the universal love and obedience of his subjects, as if he had never been so wicked as to bring himself to such a miserable end; and nothing but a criminal state of mind can prevent its appearing so to him. And if God's law be holy, just, and good, the application is easy. But to all this I may add, what would alone of itself have been a full answer to the objection, that St. Paul does the supposed impossible deed, namely, pronounces the law in contradistinction from the gospel, even as a ministration of death and condemnation to be glorious. (2 Cor. ii. 7, 9.)

3. If the divine law was holy, just, and good, a glorious law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, then this apostate world might justly have been held bound by it forever, and no relief provided. God was no more obliged in point of justice, to provide relief for fallen man, than for fallen angels. In this respect, we stood on a par with them. Our revolt did not render God less amiable in himself, or less worthy of our obedience, nor in the least free us from our original natural obligations to love him with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will. If our inclination to love and obey God ceased, yet as his worthiness of our love and obedience remained, our obligations were in full force, and the law was as reasonable and equitable after our fall as before. And so he was absolutely at liberty, in point of justice, to have held us bound by law, and never have provided any relief for any of the human race.*

* But on the other hand, if there is no loveliness in the divine nature but what results from his being my friend, then I cannot be obliged to love God, unless he is my friend; for I cannot be obliged to love a being who has no loveliness in his nature. If there is no loveliness in God, it is no sin, but rather a duty, to think there is none, and feel accordingly. And so, if mankind, by the fall, lost the favor and friendship of God, and fell under his wrath, then, on this hypothesis, their obligation to love him ceased. It was no duty for any child of Adam to love God; no sin not to love him. And if no sin, then no repentance, no atonement, no pardon was needed in the case. The divine law ceased to be obligatory the moment the favor of God was lost by the fall; and so no child of Adam could be considered as being under it. It had been inconsistent with the divine perfections in God, to have held mankind bound by it; he was obliged in justice, if he brought us into being, to provide some relief for us. Yea, God was obliged in justice to forgive us, and become our friend, or not to require our love. For it would not be just and right to require us to love him, if there is no loveliness in his nature. And, on this hypothesis, there is no love

And, if this is the very truth of the case, it will follow that it was at God's sovereign election to determine whether to grant any relief, or not; and what relief to grant; and when, and to whom; to give his Son to die with a view to save all mankind, or only a part; to send the news of the gospel to all nations, or only to some; to give every child of Adam, born in a Christian land, opportunity, by living, to hear the glad tidings, or only to grant this to some, while others die in infancy, and never hear. Those who die in infancy may as justly be held under law in the next world, as those that live may in this. God is under no more obligations to save those that die, than he is to save those that live; to grant the regenerating influences of his Spirit to them, than he is to these. As to those who live and hear the gospel once, God is not obliged to send them the news the second time, or to wait a moment longer after the first refusal; and if mankind are disinclined to hearken to the gospel, God is at liberty to determine what pains to take with them, whether much, or little, or none; whether to use external means only, or to grant the internal influences of his Spirit; whether to strive with them a longer or shorter time, in a greater or less degree, in a common or a special manner. He may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he may harden, that is, leave to their own hearts, under such external circumstances, as he certainly knows will have this issue. And if any proud, conceited rebel thinks himself hardly dealt with, and is ready, in a rage, to rise against God and against his law, with loud complaints, God is at full liberty, as the blame is wholly on the rebel's side, to treat him accordingly, and in righteous judgment give him up to the deceits of his own heart, and to the delusions of Satan, to be led captive by him at his will, into open infidelity, or into delusive hopes and joys, that he might believe a lie, and finally be damned. (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.) And thus, if the law is good, the whole of the divine conduct toward mankind, in fact, stands justified; for in no part of his conduct is there the least appearance of illegal severity. This never was objected even by his worst enemies.

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liness in his nature till he forgives us and becomes our friend. And as soon as God forgives us and becomes our friend, we shall naturally love him; and so we shall not need to be born of the spirit, for that which is born of the flesh may love a friend and benefactor; for sinners love those that love them. And so, on this scheme, the Redeemer and the Sanctifier are needless; and so, if this scheme is true, Christianity is overthrown. It concerns Mr. Cudworth to give a better answer to this reasoning than yet he has done. To say that the divine law requires us to do what is "contrary to the law of God," and yet is "holy, just, and good," is to solve the difficulty by an express self-contradiction. To say that God is in himself infinitely lovely, is to give up his whole scheme. But he must own this, or give up the gospel. — *Further Defence*, p. 221, &c.

And if his law is good, his conduct, therefore, stands completely justified.

And if any say that the law is not good, that God could not justly have held mankind bound by it, but was obliged to provide some relief; then it will inevitably follow, that that book, which affirms the divine law to be holy, just, and good, and attributes the relief provided wholly to free grace, cannot be from God; because its fundamental maxims are false. So that, of necessity, we must grant the law to be good, with all its native consequences, or be infidels. And he who from the heart does not the one, is in fact the other, in the sight of God.

If God was obliged in justice to provide all needful relief, then all the relief he has provided, which is no more than was really needed, is an act of justice; and if it is an act of justice, it is not an act of grace. And so, on this hypothesis, there is in the gospel, absolutely no grace at all.

Or, if God was obliged in justice to provide, at least, some relief; then the relief provided in the gospel, is, at least, partly an act of justice; and, if partly an act of justice, not wholly an act of grace. On either hypothesis, the gospel cannot be true, which every where claims to be wholly of free grace.

For the Son of God to become incarnate, and die, to get justice done us, as though his Father was a tyrant, is inconsistent with every perfection of the Deity. To entertain such a notion, is at least as great a reflection on the Holy One of Israel as atheism itself. To say that God is unrighteous, is as impious as to say there is no God. And a system of religious affections arising from such views, must be, in an eminent degree, an abomination to the Lord.

IV. If the divine law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, the law which all mankind are naturally under; then the degree of our sinful depravity, and the degree of our blameworthiness is to be determined by this rule; and any other judgment of ourselves we come into, not agreeable to this standard, is not according to truth. So near as we approach to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves, and to a conduct exactly answerable, so near we approach to the rule of our duty. But so far as we are destitute of that lively, high, and ravishing sense of the divine glories, which is productive of perfect love, and a perfect obedience, so far are we from what we ought to be. And so far as we are destitute of that love to our neighbor, which will effectually excite us in thought, word, and deed, to conduct toward him, as we would that he should do towards us, so far we are from the rule. And

we are to blame for every defect, in a degree equal to the greatness of the legal penalty; that is, for every defect we are so much to blame as to merit eternal misery. And so far as our judgment of our moral character is regulated by this rule, so far our opinion of ourselves is according to truth. This is to think soberly of ourselves, and as we ought to think. To think better of ourselves, is pride. And the degree of our pride and groundless self-conceit, is therefore just equal to our distance from this view of ourselves, and to our distance from an answerable frame of heart toward ourselves, in the sight of God. Just so far as we are disposed to think the law too severe, just so far are we disposed to justify ourselves and condemn God; and just so far are we self-righteous, in the worst sense of the word. On the other hand, so far as the law actually appears to our hearts to be holy, just, good, and glorious, so far we actually justify God, and take all the blame to ourselves, and loathe and abhor ourselves in his sight. And just so far, and no farther, are we free from what the Scripture means by a self-righteous spirit. Just so far as God and his law rise in their glory in our view, and to our sense and feeling, just so far our character sinks, and is rendered odious, abominable, ill-deserving, hell-deserving, in our eyes: and just so far our need of Christ and free grace comes into view. For the most exalted virtue of the highest saint, weighed in the balance of the divine law, and compared with the demerit of the least sin, is lighter than the least atom of matter, compared with the whole material system. But of this more hereafter.

Those who, in the inmost recess of their hearts, never as yet viewed the divine law, as in itself holy, just, good, and glorious, are to this day under the full power of a self-righteous spirit, and under the reigning dominion of a spirit of enmity against God, and against the glorious gospel of his Son. And the more religious and devout they are in their own opinion, just so much worse they be; as all their religion and devotion only feeds and confirms the pride of their hearts. For the whole of their good opinion of themselves as religious men, is nothing but pride and groundless self-conceit in the sight of God; who considers them in the midst of their highest raptures, as being what they are, and as deserving what they do, compared with his holy law, that perfect rule of right; which perfect rule of right they are so far from any degree of conformity to, that, as yet, in their inmost soul, they never once thought it to be good. And,

V. If the divine law is holy, just, good, and glorious, true repentance for sin cannot begin to take place in the hearts of

sinners, nor, for the same reason, can they yield any sincere obedience to it, till it begin to appear to be such. Sincere obedience to a law we sincerely hate, is a glaring inconsistence; and sincere repentance, when we do not feel ourselves to blame, is an express contradiction. But till the law begins to appear holy, just, good, and glorious, sinners cannot begin to see that that blame lies on them, which the gospel calls them to acknowledge, and to humble themselves for, when it calls them to repentance. For, as in the gospel an infinite atonement for sin is provided, the import of which is, that God's law is wholly right, and that we are wholly wrong, and as infinitely to blame as the law supposes; so, when it calls us to repentance, it cannot be understood in any other sense. Nor is any other kind of repentance the thing the gospel can possibly mean. The charge exhibited against us in the law, is by the cross of Christ pronounced to be perfectly right, and the law by which we are charged and condemned, is declared to be holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honorable; and all the blame is considered as being entirely in us, God and his throne forever guiltless. Repentance begins in our beginning to view things in this light, with an answerable frame of heart. But to object against the charge as being too severe, and against the law as requiring too much, is a full proof of an impenitent heart. For the import of such an objection is, "the fault alleged is not in me, in manner and form as set forth in the charge. He that thus charges me, therefore, has done me an injury; it is therefore proper for him to repent, and not for me." And if any sinner, in such a state of mind, should, by any delusion, be induced to believe that God withdraws the charge, and delivers him from the curse, he might in this belief forgive his Maker, and to his own apprehension be fully reconciled to him. Which reconciliation, if it be called by the name of evangelical repentance, yet is so far from being the thing, that is a full proof that such a sinner, in the eye of the gospel, is not yet convinced, that it belongs to him to repent; for as yet he does not see himself to blame in manner and form, as alleged in the divine law. Every objection a man's heart makes against the law, every plea he advances for himself, every excuse, every extenuating consideration, is a proof he does not think himself to blame as therein held forth. And the more positively he affirms that it is impossible he should love God, until first he knows that his sins are pardoned, the more positively does he declare that his uncircumcised heart is still unhumbled, and that he is still disposed to justify himself, and impute iniquity to his Maker. For God to forgive

a sinner in this view, and so bring him to a reconciliation, is virtually to own that his law was too severe, and himself to blame, and to repent and make restitution, and so induce the sinner to forgive him. And to suppose that Christ died to bring God the Father to this, is the very first-born of blasphemy. And if sinners believe such a gospel, and are ravished with it, their very faith proves them infidels; and their very joys prove they are enemies to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. There can be not the least degree of that kind of repentance which the gospel calls sinners unto, unless we feel ourselves to blame in the sense which the death of Christ imports. But the plain import of the death of Christ is, that the law by which we are charged and condemned, is a good and glorious law. For its being such, was the very thing that rendered his mediation and death needful, in order to our being forgiven, consistent with the divine honor. To be blind to the beauty of the law, to plead in our own justification, to excuse, extenuate, etc., is to declare ourselves to be, in the sight of God, impenitent infidels, enemies to Heaven. For every word we say in our justification, in this case, is to God's condemnation. For if we are not so much to blame as his law supposes, he is to blame who made the law; and repentance, restitution, and reformation, are his duty. And so a self-justifying, is a God-condemning disposition; and therefore of all things most diametrically opposite to the cross of Christ, which declares God to be wholly right, and seals the declaration with blood.

VI. If the divine law is holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the death of Christ, then the gift of Christ to be a Savior, was an act of grace absolutely free. As God was not obliged to grant any relief at all; so the relief he has granted, in every view of it, is an act of grace absolutely free. The gift of Christ to be a Redeemer, the gift of the Holy Spirit to be a sanctifier, divine illumination, faith, repentance, forgiveness, and every other blessing, contained in the gospel, is absolutely of free grace.

And by the way, this is the true gospel notion of free grace; and is what no Antinomian ever yet had a true idea of. For till the law appears to be a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honorable, the grace of the gospel cannot be seen. For it was this very thing that rendered the gift of Christ, in God, an act of grace altogether free. For had not the law been wholly good, God had been obliged in justice to grant us some relief; and had it not been altogether glorious, the death of Christ to do it honor had been needless.

And this, I say, is an idea of free grace that no Antinomian

ever had. I use the word *Antinomian*, according to its proper signification, to mean one that is against the law; which is the true character of all men, how much enlightened soever they have been, in reality or to appearance, who are yet blind to the beauty of the divine law. For all such are enemies to it in heart, whatever their profession may be. Arminians and Pelagians are professed enemies to the law, and so were those in the two last centuries, who were commonly called Antinomians. But those who profess to be enemies to the divine law, and boldly advance their objections against it, do only more impudently proclaim what more secretly lurks in the heart of every unregenerate man, how orthodox soever his profession may be. For every "carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." And therefore it is equally true, as to all unregenerate men, as the apostle affirms, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." Neither the glory nor the grace of the gospel was ever seen by an unregenerate man; for the gospel has no glory nor grace in it, only on supposition the law was a glorious law antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ. Till, therefore, the law be thus viewed, and no unregenerate man ever viewed it thus, neither the glory nor the grace of the gospel can ever be seen. "And if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

But I the rather say, this is an idea of the grace of the gospel no Antinomian ever had. To set it in contrast with that notion of free grace, which Antinomians, so called, are wont to have and to glory in, namely, being pardoned before repentance; this is free grace indeed. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," sounds very legal in an Antinomian ear. To believe the pardon of sin, and God's love to me, impenitent as I am, is pure gospel. And this belief is the source of love to God and of all religion. And these, with them, are the doctrines of free grace, which they love, and for which they are full of zeal. But as to the free grace of the gospel of Christ, which supposes that God was absolutely unobliged to grant any relief to this apostate world, as the law by which we stood condemned, was holy, just, good, and glorious; explain it, till they begin a little to understand what you mean, and they will appear as great enemies to free grace as any people in the world; just as the Pharisees of old, who made their boast of the law, and yet were enemies to the law, rightly understood. Their false notions of the law served only to feed their spiritual pride, just as false notions of Christ and free grace do with these men.

SECTION IV.

THE DESIGN OF THE MEDIATORIAL OFFICE AND WORK OF CHRIST WAS TO DO HONOR TO THE DIVINE LAW.

A MEDIATOR, to bring about a reconciliation, supposes the parties concerned to be at variance. If both parties are to blame, it is the business of a mediator to bring both parties to see their faults, to confess, reform, and make restitution, and so to make up. If one party is altogether right, and the other altogether wrong, then one party is to be wholly justified, approved, and commended, as publicly as the controversy is known, and the entire blame to be laid at the other's door; who, if he can make no restitution, must suffer according to his desert, unless the mediator, or some other, will interest himself in his welfare, so as to become his sponsor, and answer in his stead; and if his crime is of such a nature, that his penitence can make no atonement, if ever he is forgiven and received into favor, it must be simply on the credit of his sponsor. But in the case before us, God was wholly right, and we were wholly wrong; and so much to blame, that our deepest penitence ought in reason and justice to be disregarded. However, so far were we from penitence, as rather to be disposed to justify ourselves, and lay the blame on God and on his holy law. And our disaffection to the divine character and government arose even to enmity itself. When therefore the Mediator espoused his Father's honor, and testified of the world that their works were evil, they were angry, yea, they were enraged, and they put him to death as not fit to live; so far were they from a disposition to take the blame to themselves, confess, repent, return, and be reconciled. And this conduct of a set of men, who made very high claims to virtue, was but a specimen of that temper which is natural to all mankind. But what reason have mankind to be so disaffected to the Deity?

God, an absolutely perfect, and infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and of universal obedience, the Creator and original proprietor of the universe, as becomes him, assumes the authority of King and Supreme Governor over his own world, takes the throne, proclaims his divinity, saying, "I am the Lord, and besides me there is no other God; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and yield an entire obedience to his will." Adding, "he that doth these things shall live in them; but the soul that sins it shall die."

For us thus to love, honor, and obey him, is no more than a practical acknowledgment of his Godhead and Lordship; it is no more than barely giving unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. And this is all he requires, and it is our duty; and our obligations to it are infinite, and it is infinitely for our interest. So that our disaffection and rebellion are unreasonable, groundless, nay, infinitely criminal. To be disaffected and to rise in open rebellion, as we in this lower world have done, is a practical declaration in the sight of the universe, (and practice speaks louder than words,) that God's character is not good, and that his law is bad. Or in other words, it is a practical declaration, that he is not what he claims to be, by nature, God, an absolutely perfect, and infinitely glorious and amiable being, and our rightful sovereign.

To have given up his law, founded on his Godhead and Lordship, and which only asserted his proper character and worth, and claimed his proper rights, had been a practical giving up of his divinity and supremacy, in favor of a disaffection absolutely groundless, of a rebellion infinitely unreasonable; a thing very unbecoming the absolutely perfect being at the head of the universe. Better, infinitely better, a whole race of such apostates be doomed to endless woes, as a public practical declaration of the infinite evil of their crimes.

The design of the incarnation, life, and death of the Son of God, was to give a practical declaration, in the most public manner, even in the sight of the whole intellectual system, that God was worthy of all that love, honor, and obedience, which his law required, and that sin was as great an evil as the punishment threatened supposed; and so to declare God's righteousness, and condemn the sins of an apostate world, to the end God might be just, and yet a justifier of the believer. And this he did by obeying and dying in our room and stead.

The Jewish dispensation, which was designed to prepare the way for, and to introduce the Christian, and which was a shadow of which Christ is the substance, was, in its whole constitution, purposely calculated to do honor to the divine law. The clouds, and the thick darkness, and the flame of a devouring fire on Mount Sinai, the thunders and the lightnings, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, were in honor of the divine law; which was by God promulged to an assembly of men, women, and children, containing near three millions. An affair so grand as this had never before happened in this lower world. And all the variety of temporal curses enumerated and denounced against the transgressor, and all the variety of temporal blessings reckoned up and promised to the obedient,

were in honor of the divine law. And the law being written with the finger of God, on two tables of stone, laid up in the ark, and placed in the holy of holies, under the mercy-seat, the dwelling place of the God of Israel, was in honor of the divine law. And so were all the sacrifices of atonement — the altars, the priests, especially the high-priest, dressed in his holy robes, holiness to the Lord written on his forehead, the names of the twelve tribes on his breast and on his shoulder, the blood of atonement in his hand, entering once every year into the holy of holies, into the immediate presence of God, to make atonement. Nor could any transgressor of the law, under that dispensation, obtain remission of sins without shedding of blood. A plain acknowledgment, that his blood deserved to be shed, who transgressed the law. And so a practical declaration that the law was holy, just, and good.

And answerable to the spirit of that dispensation, the whole congregation of Israel were by the divine direction led, on their entering into the holy land, to Mount Gerizim and to Mount Ebal; and while the curse of the law against the transgressor was proclaimed aloud, all the congregation answered, Amen; as a most public and solemn declaration, that the law was holy, just, and good: nor could a Jew, without this acknowledgment, with any consistency, present a bull or a goat, to die in his stead, and make atonement for his sins.

But all the honors done to the divine law under that dispensation were but shadows, but mere shadows. They had no substance in them. They were acknowledgments too mean to be of any avail. They were of no weight at all to counterbalance the reproach cast on the divine Majesty by sin; and therefore the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin; yea, Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering.

Wherefore the Son of God, antecedent to his incarnation, is introduced, saying to his Father, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire." They had no dignity, no worth, no virtue, and could not answer the end. "Mine ears hast thou bored," as the Jewish master did his servant's, who of his own free will said, "I love my master and will be his servant forever. O, eternal Father, I have offered to become thy servant in this great work, and thou hast accepted the offer, and bored mine ears. Then said I, Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is within my heart." (Compare Exod. xxi. 5, 6. Ps. xl. 6, 7, 8. Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.)

Him, therefore, did God set forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness. And because he thus voluntarily

espoused the honor of his Father's government, and condemned sin in the flesh on the cross, because he thus loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore was his Father well pleased, smelt a sweet savor, exalted his Son, and became propitious to an apostate, sinful, guilty world, through him. For he, being God as well as man, was worthy, was of sufficient dignity, and his obedience and sufferings of sufficient weight in his Father's sight.

The import of that perfect obedience to his Father's will, in our stead, through the greatest trials, which the Son of God incarnate performed, was, that "God was worthy of supreme love and honor, and of universal obedience from his creature man." The import of his sufferings in our room, in which he was made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law, was, that "the curse of the law was strictly just, and such as became his Father to threaten and to execute." The import of his appearing in the presence of God in heaven, with his own blood, to make intercession for transgressors, is, that "he does not, nay, cannot, desire any favor to be shown to sinners under a notion that the law is too severe; but only as being considered holy, just, good, and glorious, worthy to be magnified and made honorable by the blood of the Son of God." And the justice of the divine law will appear in a striking light, when he who thus honored it in his own person on the cross, and thus honors it at his Father's right hand in heaven, appears to put it in execution at the last day on his near relatives, his brethren according to the flesh; who would never own the goodness of the law, nor take the blame of their disaffection and rebellion to themselves, and on this foot despised and rejected the glorious grace of the gospel. And all holy beings will echo to the last sentence, and with the highest approbation join to cry, Amen, Hallelujah; while the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever.

Thus the whole mediatorial scheme is designed, and in its own nature adapted, to do honor to the divine law.

And to do honor to the divine law was the only thing that rendered the mediatorial office and work of Christ needful in order to the salvation of sinners. For God was not an unrighteous being, and so could not be disposed to hold his creatures bound by a bad law, unless his Son would die to procure their relief. Nor was the goodness of the divine nature so small, that he could not find in his heart to show mercy to sinners, unless his Son, to move his compassions, would die for them on earth, and plead their cause in heaven. Had the law in fact been bad, it had been the most honorable thing in the divine majesty to have laid it aside expressly as such, and no mediator

had been needful in the case; and had there been no bar in the way of the honorable exercise of divine grace to a guilty world, infinite goodness, by a sovereign act, might, at an infinitely less expense, have pardoned and saved all the human race, and all the labors and sufferings of his Son to make atonement had been needless. God did not want a heart to do us justice; nay he had a heart overflowing with infinite goodness; witness the gift of his Son. And so no mediator was needful to move the divine compassions, much less to prevent his being too severe with us; yea, a mediator for any such purposes had been an infinite reproach to the Deity. A mediator therefore was needful, in order to the salvation of sinners, for no other purpose, but to do honor to the divine law, which we had dishonored by our sins. And thus he asserted the divine character, vindicated the rights of the Godhead, declared the righteousness of the divine government, condemned sin, laid all the blame of our disaffection and rebellion at our own door, while he obeyed and died in our room and stead, that we through him might be saved. But,

I. If Christ died to do honor to the divine law, then there is no glory in the gospel only on supposition that the law is a glorious law. For not one of the divine perfections are manifested in the death of an incarnate God to do honor to the divine law, if the divine law was not worthy of this honor. It was no act of wisdom in God to give his Son to die to do honor to that which deserved no such honor. It was no act of holiness, justice, or goodness. It was neither to the honor of God, nor needful to the salvation of men. And, if not one of the divine perfections are manifested in the death of Christ, only on supposition that the law is a glorious law, not one of the divine perfections can be seen in this affair, only in a view of the glory of the law. No glory can be seen in the atonement, only as the law appears to be a glorious law. To every one at enmity against the divine law, the glory of the gospel will be hid.* And,

* If God's law requires, on the penalty of eternal destruction, that which is in its own nature sinful, then it is a wicked law. But that which is "contrary to the law of God," is in its own nature sinful; for sin is a transgression of the law. But, according to Mr. Cudworth, the law requires what is "contrary to the law of God," what "clashes with our duty." (p. 222—224.) Therefore, according to him, it is a wicked law. But if it is a wicked law, God is obliged in justice to repeal it. But to give his Son to die, to do honor to a wicked law, of all things in the universe, would be most contrary to all the divine perfections. In this view of the law, therefore, not one of the divine perfections can be seen on the cross of Christ. What, then, does Mr. Cudworth mean by "loving God for his own loveliness as thus discovered by the gospel, every divine perfection being discovered as harmonizing in the salvation of the guilty by

II. If the excellency of the divine law, as a perfect rule of right, holy, just, and good, was the only thing that rendered the death of Christ needful in order to the salvation of sinners; then a view of the excellency of the divine law, as a perfect rule of right, holy, just, and good, and an answerable view of our own character and state, is the only thing that can lead us to see our need of the atonement of Christ. We cannot see our need of Christ's atonement, unless we see that which renders his atonement needful; but the excellency of the divine law was that which rendered the atonement of Christ needful: therefore we cannot see our need of the atonement of Christ, unless we see the excellency of the divine law. A sinner frightened with the apprehensions of eternal burnings, may see his need of deliverance, without any idea of the need of an infinite atonement in order thereto. And, to say, "that the divine law is holy, just, and good, in our view, but not glorious;" is to say, "that holiness, justice, and goodness, in our view, are not glorious attributes:" and if so, then neither does God deserve our love, nor is his law worthy to be honored on the cross of Christ, in our view.

So long as we are at enmity against the law, so long as the divine appears to be an inglorious, unlovely, undesirable law; not perfect in beauty, without a blemish, with application to ourselves: even so long our need of Christ to die in our

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Jesus Christ"? (p. 225,) when on his scheme there is not one divine perfection manifested, nor any loveliness of the divine nature discovered. Yea, if the law had been what Mr. Cudworth says it is, it had been in its own nature an infinitely wicked thing for the Son of God to die to do it honor. It had been to do honor to a wicked law; which is the same thing as to do honor to wickedness; which is an infinitely wicked thing. What then does Mr. Cudworth mean, by "loving God for his own loveliness"? Why, he believes, that by means of Christ's death, his sins are pardoned, and God becomes his particular friend, turned to be entirely on his side, "disposed to make him happy, and oppose whatever is contrary to his happiness," (p. 221, 223;) "and this appears lovely to him, and is all the idea of the loveliness of the divine nature he can conceive of, (p. 221;) for he loves himself, although he appears perfectly stupid to the honor of the divine character in imputing such wickedness to the Deity, as requiring what is "contrary to the law of God, and clashes with our duty." And he can be ravished to think his own happiness secure, although so blind to the beauty of the divine character as to feel disposed to declare before the world, that it is "utterly impossible" to love it. And pray, now, how does Mr. Cudworth do to keep from plunging headlong into downright infidelity? How can he believe that the Son of God became incarnate, and died to do honor to a law so unreasonable and wicked, as to require what "is inconsistent with the original constitution of a reasonable creature, and contrary to the law of God"? Why, indeed, he feels, or rather pretends to feel, no difficulty in the way. For he can, in express contradiction to himself, without a blush, pronounce this very law "holy, just, and good." "This does not infer that the law was too rigorous," says he; "no, far from it, this is only Mr. Bellamy's forced conclusion." (p. 226.) But not a word does he say to show wherein my conclusion was forced, or to free his own scheme from this glaring inconsistence.

stead, to do honor to the law, will be undiscerned. Therefore, to the natural man, in the apostolic age, when the gospel, as is acknowledged, was rightly stated, the work of redemption by Christ, appeared to be a foolish, shocking affair. (Compare 1 Cor. i. 18, 23, 24; ii. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 3.) "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." For while they were, as the same apostle observes, at enmity against God and his law, (Rom. viii. 7,) to hear that the Son of God incarnate died on the cross, to declare God's righteousness, to condemn sin, to magnify the law and make it honorable, must needs stumble and confound the carnal Jews, and appear foolishness to the pagan Greeks. No miracles therefore were sufficient to convince them of the divine original of the gospel; nothing short of the immediate influences of the Spirit of God to open their eyes and take the veil from their hearts. But unto them who are thus called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. And if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish. For indeed it had been a foolish thing for God to have given his Son to die to save sinners, had there been no need of it: and there had been no need of it, had not the divine law, which man had broken, and by which he stood condemned, been holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be honored by the blood of an incarnate God. But to natural men, the divine law does not appear to be thus glorious and thus worthy of honor: rather it appears an odious, hateful law, which ought to be repealed; "for the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be."*

* If God, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of his Son, viewed in the glass of the law, was an ugly, hateful being; then he deserved to be hated and abhorred: and then the law which required us to love him on pain of death, was an unreasonable, tyrannical law: and then it deserved to be hated and treated with contempt, and not to be loved and honored: and then the death of Christ to do it honor, was not the wisdom of God, but a stumbling-block and foolishness: and the gospel is not divine, is not from God; nothing remains but infidelity.

To say, that the law is holy, just, and good, in requiring us to love a hateful character on pain of death, is worse than infidelity. To believe God a hateful being, and a tyrant, in our hearts, and yet with our mouths to say, it is in him holy, just, and good, to require us to love him on pain of death, is to speak lies in hypocrisy. My Theron believed the law holy, just, and good, in requiring supreme love on pain of death, when he said, "Let all heaven forever love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although I receive my just desert and perish forever." He saw God's character exhibited in his law to be lovely. This led him to see why Christ so loved and so honored this character on the cross; and

III. An Antinomian spirit is an anti-Christian spirit; to hate the divine law is to be an enemy to the cross of Christ; to hate the divine law is to be an enemy to the Son of God incarnate, who loved the law, and died to do it honor; an enemy to his character, and to the very design of his death.

And, an Antinomian spirit is the very source of infidelity. For if the divine law is an odious, hateful law, it is incredible, it is absolutely incredible, that the Son of God should come from heaven, and die to do it honor; therefore, every Antinomian is at heart an infidel. But every unregenerate man is in this sense an Antinomian. (Rom. viii. 7.) Therefore every unregenerate man is under the reigning power of infidelity; and therefore it is written, (1 John v. 1,) "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" and, (Rom. x. 9,) "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

IV. If God the Father gave his Son to die, if God the Son voluntarily left his Father's bosom, and expired upon the cross to do honor to the divine law; then on the cross of Christ we have the highest possible external proof of the goodness of the divine law. The highest proof which could have been given by God the Father or God the Son; and so the highest external proof, that God our Creator is infinitely worthy of our supreme love and universal obedience, and that our disaffection to him and to his government is entirely groundless, yea, infinitely criminal, exactly agreeable to the import of the divine law.

Therefore, to doubt of the infinite amiableness of God our Creator, to doubt of the absolute perfection of his law and government, or to doubt whether our disaffection be thus

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Christ crucified, in this view, appeared to him the wisdom of God. Should one tell Theron, that Christ never did love this character of God; never did think "that all heaven ought forever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, viewed as thus disposed to punish sin with so great severity;" and should he affirm, that this is a "species of love beyond what Jesus Christ ever had:" and that it was not from love to this character originally, and to do it honor, that Christ was willing to endure the cross and despise the shame; but merely because he was bribed, because his Father hired him by "the joy set before him:" and should one endeavor to prove all this from Scripture: Theron, shocked with the blasphemy, would be ready at once to pronounce the man worse than an infidel. And yet, if this is not the point of light in which Mr. Cudworth views things, I know not what he means, by what he says, (p. 224;) for, in any other view, there is no force in what he says. For if Christ verily thought in his heart, and that previous to a consideration of the joy set before him, that "all heaven ought forever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, for being so severe against sin;" then Theron, through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, was only brought to view things in a Christian light; that is, in the same light that Christ did.

groundless and thus criminal, is to doubt of the truth of the gospel. Every objection against the divine character, every objection against the divine law, every sin-extenuating, self-justifying plea, is the language of infidelity. For if our objections against God and his law are of the least weight, or if our pleas do in the least render us excusable, then Jesus was not the Son of God. For if Jesus was the Son of God, God and his law are wholly right, and we are wholly wrong, and as much to blame and as inexcusable as the curse of the law supposes; for this was the ground on which he died. And if in his death he sealed a falsehood with his blood, surely he did not come from God.

Therefore, to believe with all the heart that Jesus is the Christ, is to believe with all the heart, that God our Creator is infinitely amiable, infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience from his creature man. And to believe with all the heart, that the divine law, which requires this of us, in our present state, on pain of eternal damnation, is a holy, just, and good, and glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honorable by the obedience and death of an incarnate God: to believe with all the heart that our disaffection to the divine character, law, and government, is not only entirely groundless, but infinitely criminal; and to believe with all the heart, that the Son of God, in this view, became incarnate, lived and died, that he might declare God and his law to be wholly right, and the whole blame to be in us; or in other words, that he might declare God's righteousness, and condemn sin in the flesh; that this was the import of his being made a curse to redeem us from the curse, and that this was the design of his being set forth to be a propitiation; and that it is only in his name, and through him, who has thus done, that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. But, to believe these truths with all the heart, to come cordially into these sentiments, is perfectly contrary to every vicious bias in the heart of a sin-loving, sin-extenuating, self-justifying, God-hating, law-condemning creature; which is the character of every unregenerate man. Therefore, every unregenerate man is not only at heart an infidel, but even as great an enemy to the truth of the gospel, as he is to the holiness, justice, and goodness of the law. Therefore, "no man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost." No man can come to the Son, but whom the Father draws. (John vi. 44.) And, "whosoever believeth Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." And yet,

V. From this view of the mediatorial office and work of

Jesus Christ, his true character and divine mission may be infallibly determined. Had he been an enemy to the divine law, which the God of Israel had so honored on Mount Sinai, and in the whole Jewish dispensation, it had been a full proof, that he was not the Messiah promised in the Jewish sacred writings —a full proof, rather that he was an enemy to the God of Israel, and on the side of his rebellious subjects, who all agree to hate his law. But now it appears, that he loved his Father with all his heart; was perfectly in his interest, wholly on his side, and on the side of his law and government. He judged his Father to be wholly right, and we to be wholly wrong; his Father's law to be holy, just, and good, and we altogether to blame; even as much to blame as the law supposed; and was as great an enemy to the wickedness of an apostate world, as the Father himself. While his regard to the welfare of lost sinners was so great, that he was willing to die for their redemption, he looked upon them so much to blame, and so deserving of the threatened punishment, that he had not the least desire they should be pardoned, unless in a way in which it should be most explicitly acknowledged, that it had been a worthy, becoming deed in God to have punished them according to law. And thus he was to perfection his Father's friend, and to perfection an enemy to the spirit of his Father's rebellious subjects. Thus he "loved righteousness and hated iniquity." And in this frame of heart, he perfectly obeyed his Father's law, and offered up himself a sacrifice to God, for the sins of the world; which is a full demonstration that he was sent of God; for he is his Father's very image.

We may often, from the countenance of a child, guess who his father is; but here the Son is "the express image" of his Father's person; so that no man, who knows God the Father, can doubt whether Jesus is his Son; for the very glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. Justly therefore did our blessed Savior condemn the infidel Jews, as hating his Father, because they hated him; for he and his Father were so exactly alike, that to hate him was a full proof they hated the Father also, (John xv. 23;) and justly did he dispute their claim to have God for their Father, and argue that they rather had the devil to their father, from the malignant spirit they showed towards him, who was the very image of the Deity. "If God were your Father, ye would love me." "Ye are of your father the devil." And justly did he attribute all their opposition to him and to his cause, to their ignorance of, and hatred to, the true God, and affirm that no man could be an infidel, but from a

wicked, ungodly heart. (John iii. 19—21; vii. 17; viii. 38, 48; xv. 21, 25.)

To say that Jesus Christ, who loved the divine law, and lived and died to do it honor, came from the devil, who hates the divine law, and hath set up his kingdom in opposition to it, and is at the head of the grand rebellion in the intellectual system, is just the same kind of absurdity Christ's enemies were driven to of old, when to evade the evidence exhibited in his miracles, they said, "he casteth out devils by Beelzebub;" for both equally suppose, that Satan is divided against himself, and is pulling down his own kingdom with his own hands. (Matt. xii. 24, 26.)

To be blind to the glory of Christ crucified, is of the same nature, and altogether as criminal, as to be blind to the glory of God the Father; and to be an unbeliever in the Son, as great a vice as to be an enemy to the Father; and to reject revealed religion, an argument of as bad a heart, as downright atheism. The sentence therefore is just, "he that believeth not shall be damned;" for the gospel carries its own evidence along with it, as clearly as the visible creation. Nay, all the divine perfections are more clearly to be seen in the cross of Christ, to one not criminally blind, than the invisible things of God be, in the things which are made; for the glory of God is to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ. So that, with the Jews of old, all who live under the light of the gospel in any age, have no cloak for their sin, if they continue unbelievers.

VI. If the design of Christ's mediatorial office and work was to do honor to the divine law, we may hence learn the nature of Christ's merits, or why his obedience was so meritorious in his Father's eyes, and why the sacrifice of himself was so acceptable, of so sweet-smelling a savor, and his whole character, office, and work, so infinitely well-pleasing to the Deity, that, to testify his approbation in the sight of the whole universe, he raised him from the dead, took him up into heaven, gave him a place on his own throne, and at his own right hand, issued out public orders through the world above, "Worship him, all ye gods;" and resigned up all the angelic hosts to his command as ministering spirits to do his will, and set him at the head of the whole universe, with all power and authority in heaven and earth, to reign till all his enemies are put under his feet, and his whole scheme carried into execution, putting all things under him, not only all created things, but even God the Holy Ghost, to be sent in his name to convince the world of sin, and effectually to call home the elect to God through

him, for all things were put under him, him only excepted who did put all things under him. And further, to testify his approbation and infinite delight in the obedience and sacrifice of his Son, peace and good will are proclaimed to this revolted world, God becomes propitious, ready to be reconciled to any, how vile soever, who repent and return in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; so now repentance and remission of sin in his name may be preached to all nations, and whosoever will may come, may return to God through him, the fullest assurances of acceptance in his name being given. I say, if the design of Christ's mediatorial office and work, of his life and death, was to do honor to the divine law, we may see the reason why his merit is so great in his Father's eyes, and why he is thus accepted and thus rewarded by him; it was because in all, *he declared his Father's righteousness.* He rendered to God the glory which was due unto his name. He glorified his Father on earth, and therefore his Father glorifies him in heaven.*

Our revolt from God, in this lower world, had been an open, public, practical declaration, in the sight of the whole intellectual system, — that the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, was not worthy to be loved and obeyed by his creature, man, as his law required; nor should we deserve, nor need we fear, that we should be punished according to his law, if we did rebel.

Love to the Deity, in the Governor of the world, awakened infinite resentment. And to bear testimony against this infi-

* There are thousands that talk of trusting in the righteousness of Christ, who hate his righteousness with all their hearts. They pretend to build all their hopes on his merit, when that, in him, which was so meritorious in his Father's eyes, is the very abhorrence of their souls. Every carnal, unregenerate heart, is at enmity against the divine law. (Rom. viii. 7.) But to hate the divine law, is to hate that, in a conformity to which the righteousness of Christ consisted, and his merit lay. He who is disaffected to this law, is therefore equally disaffected to the true and real character of Christ; he hates that righteousness of Christ, which was so meritorious in his Father's eyes. And can a man consistently and really trust in the merit of that, which, in his eyes has no merit in it, but is rather altogether odious? Is not he, who denies the infinite amiableness of the Deity, as he is in himself, and yet pretends to trust in the righteousness of Christ, which consisted in treating God as an infinitely amiable being, guilty of the most ignorant and stupid self-contradiction? What then is it, that men do trust in, to whom the gospel is entirely hid? What is the Christ they love, and what do they mean by his righteousness and merit? Why, one man believes that the law is abated; and this gives him comfort: another believes there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners; and this gives him hope: and another believes his sins in particular are forgiven; and this gives him joy more abundantly. And each one calls his belief faith in Christ, when it is the belief of a lie. And each one thinks he loves Christ and trusts in his righteousness, because he loves and trusts in his own lie; for a lie is at the bottom of the confidence of every carnal man; and a lie, which the divine law, were it set home, would detect. (Rom. vii. 7, 8.)

nitely impious and wicked insult, all the human race were doomed to eternal death. Thus was the wrath of God revealed from heaven.

The interposition of the Son of God in our nature, to obey, and die in the room of rebellious, guilty man, was a practical acknowledgment, made in the most public manner, in the sight of heaven and earth, and in a manner the most honorary to the Deity, — that God was as worthy to be loved and obeyed, as the law supposed; and our disaffection and rebellion as great an evil; and that therefore the law, in all its strictness, and with all its curses, is holy, just, and good. Thus God's dignity was asserted, his authority owned, the righteousness of his government declared, his moral character vindicated, and sin condemned, and in the whole, the glory given unto God which was due unto his name. This pleased the holy Governor of the universe. He smelt a sweet savor in this sacrifice, exalted his Son, and became propitious to a guilty race through him. For now he "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

He might be just. — Just to the rights of the Godhead, to the honor of his law and government, and sacred authority, these being all effectually secured. Nay, to become propitious to a guilty world, as a reward of Christ's merit, was an honor, an infinite honor to his Son, who had honored him; and so was to the glory of God the Father. For if the Son is honored for honoring the Father, it is all to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. i. 11.) To bestow eternal life on the foot of law, in testimony of his approbation, when his creatures, by supreme love and honor, and universal obedience to him, practically acknowledge him to be God and Lord, is altogether to the glory of God the Father. Even so it was in this case also. And thus God might be just, even as just to his own honor, in every point of view, in justifying him that believeth in Jesus, as he would have been in the bestowment of eternal life, as a reward to perfect obedience, had man remained loyal to his sovereign; for, not only was the curse removed, but even the blessing itself was merited. And while bestowed as a reward to him whose merit lay in glorifying his Father on earth, the very bestowment of the blessing was to the glory of God the Father. And thus God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Which believeth in Jesus. — Who in a view of the glory of the divine nature, and the excellency of the divine law, and conscious to the inexcusableness and infinite criminalness of his disaffection and rebellion, believes that the Son of God hath

become incarnate, lived, and died, for the ends already mentioned, and in this belief is encouraged and emboldened in his name to return and come to God; to come to God through him. For, to come to God by Christ, (Heb. vii. 25,) in the name of Christ, (John xvi. 23,) believing on his name, (John i. 12,) and to have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (Heb. x. 9,) are all expressions of the same import.

Heavenly things cannot be fully represented by things earthly; however, our conceptions of the nature of Christ's mediation may be a little assisted by such a similitude as this:—

Suppose a father, of an unblemished character, admirably skilled in the art of government, at the head of a numerous family of children, wise and upright, and kind in all his conduct towards them; in a word, suppose his character without a blemish, and his government without a fault. In this case, there can arise no disaffection to his person or government among his children, unless the fault be wholly on their side; for it is supposed there is no fault on his. His eldest son grows proud and haughty, loves bad company, and turns debauchee. Meanwhile, he naturally becomes disaffected to his father's character and government, and disrelishes all his ways. At length he rises in open rebellion, leaves his father's house, and seeks another home, and blackens his father's name wherever he goes. He is blamed by the neighbors, and he justifies himself; but all he says in his own vindication is to his father's condemnation; for he cannot say one word to justify his own conduct, but which at least implicitly declares the fault to be in his father; for if his father is wholly right, he is wholly wrong. A self-justifying spirit, therefore, in him, is most provoking to his father. But as his disaffection is great, he entertains a very ill idea of his father's character, and is heartily at enmity against his government, and it is as natural to justify himself and declaim against his father's conduct, as it is to breathe; and let any man appear a hearty friend to his father, vindicate his character, and justify all his conduct, he feels himself reproached, and in a rage is ready to rise and revenge himself; and protests he never will be reconciled to his father, and live at home, unless he will alter his whole plan of government, and bring down the orders of his family to his taste. But as the father is conscious there is no fault on his side, so it appears to him inconsistent with his own honor, and with the general good of his family, to alter in one single point. For, says he, "My rebellious son is altogether to blame, and there is need of alter-

ation in none but him." Thus stands the controversy. Should he, in a delirium, believe his father's character entirely altered, and that he was become altogether love to him, rebellious as he is, the delusion might give him joy, and confirm his vicious temper, both at once. Should one undertake to be a mediator, under a notion that the father was partly to blame, a little too rigid, it might please the son, but it would be an affront to the father; and such a mediator would lose all his influence in a moment. He would be looked upon as taking the wrong side, and countenancing wickedness; a minister of sin, one that hated righteousness and loved iniquity. No mediator could find acceptance, but one who should most explicitly declare the father to be wholly right, and the rebellious son to be wholly wrong. Nor could his mediation be of any influence to procure a pardon, any further than it tended to assert the father's injured character, and vindicate his abused government, and establish his affronted authority, and humble and reclaim his haughty, ruined child. Nor could any repentance be ever looked upon sincere, or any reconciliation be esteemed genuine in the rebellious son, but what should have its foundation in thorough conviction that his father's character and government were wholly right; and his own temper and conduct, from first to last, entirely wrong. An entire alteration in the state of his mind would therefore be absolutely necessary, to the end his father's character and government might appear in their native beauty. And as soon as ever he begins to see the beauty of his father's character and government, he will begin with all his heart, to take all the blame to himself; and be ready, with the prodigal son, to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." And now he will be glad to return, if he may.

A crime may be too great to be forgiven, merely upon repentance, let the criminal be ever so penitent. Thus, a wilful murderer must be put to death, let him be ever so sorry for his crime. And thus a prince, lately married to a poor maid, who, notwithstanding all her obligations to fidelity, soon after marriage, to his great reproach, prostitutes herself to the meanest wretch in the kingdom, is obliged in honor to himself and to his kingdom, to put her away, let her penitency be ever so great. Pardon cannot be granted in such cases merely upon repentance; something further is plainly needful. But these instances fall infinitely below the case they are designed to represent; for, in the sight of God, a sinner, ever so penitent for his crimes, deserves so much to be cast off forever, that infinite wisdom, goodness, and rectitude, judged he could not honor-

ably be pardoned and received into favor, unless the Son of God himself would become incarnate, and stand, and obey, and die in his stead. Penitence is so far from being a sufficient atonement for our sins, that merely the defects attending the deepest repentance of the most humble, broken-hearted saint on earth, according to law, that perfect rule of right, merits eternal damnation. There is no hope, therefore, in the case of a penitent sinner, absolutely no hope at all, but what arises from the atonement, merits, and meditaion of Christ, and the free grace of God through him, as revealed in the gospel.

This view of the mediation of Christ may help us to understand the following Scripture phrases: —(John iii. 17.) God sent his Son, that the world *through him* might be saved. (1 John iv. 9.) That we might have life *through him.* (John xx. 31.) Have life *through his name.* (Rom. vi. 23.) The gift of God is eternal life *through* Jesus Christ. (Acts x. 43.) *Through his name* whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Justified *in the name* of the Lord Jesus. (Rom. v. 1.) Have peace with God *through him.* (Rom. v. 9.) Saved from wrath *through him.* (John xiv. 6.) He is *the way* to the Father, and no man cometh to the Father but *by him.* (John x. 9.) I am the *door. By me* if any man enter in. (John xvi. 23.) Ask the Father *in my name.* (Heb. vii. 25.) Come to God *by him.* (1 Pet. i. 21.) *By him* do believe in God. (Heb. x. 19, 20.) Boldness to enter into the holiest *by the blood* of Jesus. *By a new and living way,* which he hath consecrated for us. (Eph. ii. 18.) *Through him* have access to the Father. (Eph. v. 20.) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, *in the name* of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. ii. 5.) Offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ.* (Eph. i. 6.) Made us acceptable *in the beloved.* (2 Cor. v. 18, 19.) God hath reconciled us unto himself *by Jesus Christ.* God was *in Christ* reconciling the world to himself.

For as the mediation of Christ was designed to secure the divine honor, and open a way for the exercise of divine grace to the glory of God the Father, and as he hath finished the work appointed him to do; so through *him* God can consistently with his honor, call and invite a guilty world to return and be reconciled, and can stand ready to pardon and receive to favor, and give eternal life to all that come to him in Christ's name. And whosoever shall hear God's call, understand and believe the gospel, may see sufficient warrant to come, may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, to

come to God by him; and such shall be justified in his name, freely by divine grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; be accepted themselves in the beloved, and their spiritual sacrifices be acceptable to God by him; and through him they may have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And whatsoever they ask in his name shall be granted. For through him they may have access to God.

And the same view of the glory of the holy majesty of heaven and earth, which brings us to see that God and his law are wholly right, and our disaffection and rebellion wholly wrong, and infinitely criminal, and so to see our need of Christ's mediation, righteousness, and atonement; at the same time discovers God to be the supreme good, and the gospel to be true. In consequence of which, it appears our highest duty and highest interest to return to God, the fittest and happiest thing in the world. This begets an inclination to return to God as our sovereign Lord and supreme good. And so a foundation for repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and for every filial grace, is at once laid in the soul.

We return to God in Christ's name, conscious eternal destruction is our just desert. Our courage, our boldness, even all our hope of acceptance, is from mere grace and infinite goodness of God through Jesus Christ. Hell our due, we look only to free grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. Our whole dependence rests here. And this is what St. Paul calls, "faith in Christ's blood." It implies an understanding and belief of the report of the gospel, as to the nature of Christ's mediatorial office and work, and an exercise of heart towards the Mediator, answerable to the nature of his office and work, called "receiving him," and "believing *in his name;*" and denoted by those phrases so often used in the New Testament, when speaking of a sinner's coming to God *by* Christ, *through* Christ, *in the name* of Christ. For to come to God by Christ, through Christ, in the name of Christ, and by faith in Christ's blood, are all of the same import.

To say, that faith consists in "the bare belief of the bare truth," without admitting any other idea into its definition, does not come up to the plain purport of these phrases, which evidently denote a dependence on him as Mediator. To come to God in his name, by him, and through him, who is the appointed Mediator between God and man, is not only to believe him to be such, but also to be affected towards him as such, in all our approaches to God. It is not only to believe him to be the Messiah, but to believe in his name

as such, and to have boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood." *

Should a soldier belonging to the army of Prince Ferdinand, steal away into the Prussian camp, and attempt to murder that noble hero, the king of Prussia, to whose glory Prince Ferdinand is most firmly attached; should this wicked soldier be apprehended, condemned to die, and brought forth to the gallows; and while both armies are assembled to see the execution, and agreed to cry, "Away with such a vile fellow from the earth, he is not fit to live!" should Prince Ferdinand step forth,

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* *Objection.* To come to God in the name of Christ; is the fruit of faith, and not that faith itself by which we are justified. He who believes the gospel to be true, has the whole of that which the New Testament means by justifying faith. He will come to Christ, and come to God in the name of Christ; but these are the fruits of faith, and not faith itself.

Answer. I grant these are the fruits of faith. That is, the fruits of a belief of the truth of the gospel. But the question is still undetermined, which is this: Does not the New Testament mean to comprehend this belief and these fruits of it, in justifying faith? Or does this belief justify a sinner prior to these effects? Our Savior said, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." If a bare belief that he was the Messiah, entitled to eternal life, then one who believed this had a title to eternal life before he came to him, and if so, he had no need to come to him that he might have life. Our Savior directed his disciples to ask all things of the Father in his name. He also taught them every day to pray, "forgive us our debts." Query: How can we go to God in the name of Christ for the pardon of daily transgressions, if pardon is not to be obtained this way? If pardon is had "by a bare belief of the bare truth," we are not in the belief of the truth to ask for pardon in the name of Christ, because we are pardoned already. And so we are never to ask pardon in the name of Christ at all. Before we believe the gospel, we cannot do it: and when we believe the gospel, it is too late; for we are pardoned already. And if we sin, as we daily do, we must never look to God in the name of Christ for pardon, repent and pray, looking toward the holy temple, as the Jews were directed to do, (1 Kin. viii.,) but only believe the gospel to be true. That is, believe that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement. But we are not to say, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions; for this is something more than "a bare belief of the bare truth;" and so is not proper in order to obtain pardon. And so neither at first conversion, nor through the course of our lives, have we any occasion, nor ought we to look up to God in the name of Christ, and pray, saying, "forgive us our debts." We must only believe the gospel to be true, and in this belief, according to Mr. Sandeman, we are to be perfectly "passive," "no act, exertion, or exercise of the human mind," is to be in the affair; for pardon at first conversion, and afterwards is, he grants, to be obtained in the same way. (Letters on Theron, p. 418.) A wrong notion of the gospel, leads Mr. S. to this wrong notion of faith. For if this be the sum of the gospel, "there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners through the atonement, to be by God dispensed according to his sovereign pleasure, in a sovereign way: then in the nature of things, there is ground only for a passive belief of this truth." There is in fact no room for any "act, exertion, or exercise of the human mind," in the affair. But if the gospel reveals God as ready to be reconciled to all that come to him in the name of Christ, then no sooner do I believe the gospel to be true, but I also come to him in the name of Christ. As to what is implied in the declaration of the gospel, (see sect. vii. and viii.) if it should appear that there is no forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, while such, Mr. S.'s scheme, must be esteemed fundamentally wrong.

and before all the multitude justify the law by which he is condemned to die, and offer a ransom for his life to the acceptance of his Prussian majesty; and then turning to his wicked soldier, should he declare, "O guilty wretch! repent of this thy wickedness, and on thy knees ask pardon of his Prussian majesty in my name, and thy sin shall be blotted out:" would not the meaning of the words be easy to the understanding of all the assembled multitude? Not his repentance, nor his asking pardon in Prince Ferdinand's name, do in the least counterbalance his crime, or pay a ransom for his life. Prince Ferdinand's mediation, ransom, and declaration, are the sole foundation of hope to the guilty wretch. Emboldened by these, he falls at his Prussian majesty's feet, and with a penitent heart, looks up to him for pardon in Prince Ferdinand's name; and, in this way, is forgiven, simply on Prince Ferdinand's account.* But no similitude from earthly things can fully reach the case before us: because the infinite dignity of the great King of the universe, against whom we have rebelled, not only renders our past, but even our present guilt, infinitely great. The true convert, therefore, not only deserves eternal damnation in the highest exercises of repentance, every whit as much as he did before, according to law and strict justice: but also deserves eternal damnation afresh for the imperfections attending his very repentance. The blood of Christ, and the gracious declarations of the gospel, are therefore in an eminent and peculiar sense, the only foundation of hope there is in his case. But of this more afterwards.

* But should the wicked soldier be too stomachful to fall upon his knees and ask pardon in Prince Ferdinand's name, his belief, that in this way pardon might be obtained, would not entitle him to it, but rather render him the most inexcusable man alive. So had an Israelite, bitten with a fiery serpent, believed that whosoever looked up to the brazen serpent should be healed, but not desiring a cure, should he refuse to look up, belief would not have healed him. So had Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost, when pricked at the heart to think that they had murdered the Messiah, refused to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the call they had, their belief that he was the Messiah, and that there was forgiveness with God through his name, would not have entitled them to pardon. And therefore, "a bare belief of the bare truth," is not the whole of what is comprised in the Scripture notion of justifying faith. But, says Mr. Sandeman, (Letters on Theron, p. 417,) "if more than a bare persuasion of the truth be admitted as requisite to justification," the whole of Christianity is overthrown: to which it may be answered, that Peter made repentance requisite. (Acts ii. 38; iii. 19.) But, says Mr. Sandeman, "the sincere penitent may be saved without any Christ or atonement at all." (p. 89, etc.) No; Peter not only said, "repent," but also, "be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;" and constantly affirmed, that there is no other name whereby we must be saved. Peter's penitents, therefore, could be saved only in the name of Christ. But to say that repentance is before forgiveness, overthrows the whole gospel, in Mr. Sandeman's view; and indeed it does overthrow his whole gospel, namely, that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement, for impenitent sinners, while such, before any act, exercise, or exertion of the mind. But of this, more in sect. v. and viii.

VII. If the design of Christ's mediatorial office, labors, and sufferings, was to do honor to the divine law, and if hereby he has opened a way for the honorable exercise of divine grace towards sinners; then on the cross of Christ, every motive, every encouragement to repentance for sin, and a hearty reconciliation to God, is collected and brought to a point. God is declared to be an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and universal obedience. The divine law is declared to be holy, just, good, and glorious: our disaffection and rebellion to be altogether groundless and infinitely criminal; and yet we have the fullest proof that God is ready to forgive, through the blood of his own Son, all those who repent and return to him, in the name of Christ; in which all the motives and encouragements to repentance and reconciliation are virtually comprised Had the Son of God died, because the law was too severe to purchase abatements, the cross of Christ itself had justified our disaffection to that perfect rule of right, and our enmity to the divine character therein exhibited. The cross of Christ had declared, that we were right, and that God was wrong. But when he obeys the law himself, and in his own body bears its curse on the tree, in our room and stead, because the law was good, to do it honor; if we still object, we have no cloak for our sin; nay, we must give up our objections, or renounce Christianity. To believe the gospel to be true, is to give up all our objections as impious and blasphemous; to acknowledge God to be wholly right, and take all the blame to ourselves; to come cordially into the import of Christ's death, is to look upon God as infinitely glorious, and ourselves as infinitely odious: truths sealed by that blood which made atonement, and opened a way for our pardon. And if God is infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and universal obedience; and if we never had any reason to be disaffected to him; and if our rebellion from first to last has been entirely groundless; nay, infinitely criminal; and if yet, after all, God is ready to forgive us on Christ's account, and invites us to return and be reconciled through him, and offers in this way to become our God and Father forever; what further, by way of motive or encouragement, can be presented before our minds, to induce us to repent and be converted, to return and be reconciled to God? And yet, all this is set in the strongest point of light on the cross of Christ, if he died because the law was good, to do it honor. (Compare Rom. iii. 25, 26; and 2 Cor. v. 20, 21.)

There can now, therefore, be nothing but our disinclination to a reconciliation to God, that can be as a bar in the way of

our return. For on God's side, all things are ready, and he invites us to come. His oxen and fatlings are killed; the feast is prepared, the doors of his house, the gates of heaven are open, and we, apostate, hell-deserving rebels, have not only free liberty to return to our allegiance, but are urged, are beseeched, and that by God himself and by his Son, to be reconciled. Every beauty meets in the divine character, and every excellency in his government; our disaffection is not only groundless, but infinitely criminal; and all this is declared, is sealed and confirmed, by the very blood that was shed to make atonement; nothing, therefore, can keep us back but our own hearts, nor can the fault be any where but in ourselves. How inexcusable our guilt, how aggravated our damnation, if, after all, we refuse to return and be reconciled!

Should any say, "I do look upon the divine law, holy, just, and good; and I feel reconciled to God." Well: but how came this to pass? "I believed myself delivered from the curse, and that God was reconciled to me." If this is all, you are still blind and deaf to the import of the cross of Christ, which declares the divine character to be perfect in beauty, and his law to be holy, just, and good, previous to the consideration of our being pardoned; and that our disaffection to the divine character and government was inexcusable and infinitely criminal; and would have remained so, had we never been forgiven. It is not the divine character and government, therefore, you are reconciled to; but the whole of your reconciliation consists in a belief that you are safe. And this is not to be reconciled to God; it is only to love yourself. "But it is impossible I should be reconciled to God on any other ground." That is, impossible you should look on the divine character and government perfect in beauty, without a blemish, although thus declared to be, on the cross of Christ, and the declaration sealed with the blood of God's own Son. Christ died to condemn your sin, to declare your disaffection infinitely vile; you extenuate your sin, and justify your disaffection; and cry, "It is impossible I should do otherwise; impossible to look upon God as a lovely being, only in belief of his love to you;" which is implicitly to say, that there is "no loveliness in the divine nature, only on account of his love to you." And so, if you are damned, God will be no longer God. Language not of a humble penitent, but of a haughty rebel; not harmonizing with the import of the cross of Christ, but exactly the reverse. For had it not been a becoming, glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert, the death of Christ had been entirely needless.

SECTION V.

SIN AN INFINITE EVIL.

As to the degree of faultiness there is in sin, or, in other words, as to the degree of blameworthiness, there is in a creature's becoming disaffected to, and rising in rebellion against, the infinitely glorious God that made him, it cannot be determined by the sentiments of the rebels themselves, who will naturally be apt to extenuate their fault, and justify their conduct. There is no so easy and safe a way to determine this point with exactness as to appeal to the judgment of God, who knows what our obligations to obedience precisely are, and with the greatest exactitude balances the degree of our blame. And besides, it is by his judgment this matter is to be finally decided.

But the divine law, which is a transcript of the divine nature, and which expresses the very sentiments of his heart, and by which he will finally judge the world, in the penalty it has threatened to the transgressor, exactly determines what God's judgment is in this case; in which it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This curse contains all that evil, which the law threatens, and which Christ came to deliver us from, and which the wicked will be doomed to at the day of judgment. What the wicked will be doomed to at the day of judgment, when God will render to every man according to his works, our Savior has determined in the most express manner. (Matt. xxv. 41, 46.) "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." It will be more tolerable for some wicked men at the day of judgment than for others, as some are guilty of fewer and less aggravated crimes, (Matt. xi. 20, 24;) but however different the degrees of pain will be to different persons, yet the misery of each one will be eternal; that is, infinite in point of duration. For no one is ever to be released out of hell. For there is a great gulf fixed, (Luke xvi. 26;) and the fire is never to be quenched and the worm never to die, (Matt. ix. 44, 46, 48;) for the wicked are to be punished with everlasting destruction. (2 Thess. i. 9.) And as the divine law denounces the curse for the first transgression, for any one sin, so there is consequently no one breach of the divine law, but what in the judgment of God deserves everlasting misery. But

everlasting misery is an infinite punishment; and therefore in the judgment of God there is an infinite evil in sin; yea, there is no one transgression of the divine law, but what is infinitely evil.

And it must be remembered, that this law, in which the Judge of all the earth threatens eternal misery for any one transgression, for not continuing in all things, was in force and binding on all mankind, antecedently to a consideration of the gift of Christ and the work of redemption by him; and was by God esteemed to be holy, just, and good, and the whole world, Jew and Gentile, were by him looked upon as guilty, their mouths stopped without excuse, no objection against his law, no plea in their own behalf to make, not one word to say. And in this view, he gave his only-begotten Son to die in their stead. To deny this, is to renounce the gospel. And all who believe that Christ died to save sinners from the eternal torments of hell, must grant that, antecedent to a consideration of his death, they were justly exposed to such a punishment; as otherwise his death for this end had been needless. But if they were justly exposed to such a punishment antecedently to a consideration of his death, then sin, previous to a consideration of the grace of the gospel, was an infinite evil. But,

I. If sin is an infinite evil, antecedently to a consideration of the gift of Christ, then God is infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience from us, considered merely as being what he is in himself and our Creator; for if he is not infinitely worthy, we cannot be infinitely obliged. And if our obligations are not infinite, we cannot be infinitely to blame. It is, therefore, the plain import of the divine law, that the God who made us, and whose we are, is an absolutely perfect, and so an infinitely glorious and amiable being; and that, on this account, we are under infinite obligations to love and obey him. Therefore, that love to God which arises merely from self-love, in a belief that Christ died for me, that my sins are forgiven, and that I shall be saved, is not that kind of love which the divine law requires, but a love essentially different; for, one wholly blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and at enmity to the divine character as exhibited in the law, and so in the eye of the law, dead in sin, may be full of this kind of love, even as full of it as the carnal Israelites were of joy at the side of the Red Sea.

And to deny that God is to be loved by believers with that kind of love which the divine law requires, is to say, that the law is not a rule of life to believers; it is to set aside the divine law and real holiness; and to substitute affections merely selfish

and wholly graceless in their room. And this is the essence of Antinomianism.

It is true, the gift of Christ, considered as a benefit done to us, lays us under infinite obligations to love God with a love of gratitude; but at the same time, the very nature of the gift supposes that we were before under infinite obligations to love God for his own excellency, and infinitely to blame for not loving him; as otherwise the gift of Christ, to be a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law, had been needless. Now, practically to deny the infinite amiableness of the Deity, and our infinite obligations to love him as such, and then to pretend to love God for the gift of his Son, is as though we should say, "God does not deserve the love the law requires; the law was, therefore, an unrighteous law; but Christ has redeemed us from its curse, and we are glad;" which declaration would be a full proof of our enmity to God and to his Son.

II. If sin is an infinite evil, if not to love the infinitely glorious God our Maker with all our hearts, so as from love to be perfectly obedient to his will in thought, word, and deed, is an infinite evil; then those who are wholly blind to the holy beauty of the divine nature, and consequently entirely destitute of true love and of true obedience, are, in the sight of God, infinitely to blame for every thought, word, and action. The ploughing of the wicked is sin. The prayers of the wicked are sin. The sacrifices of the wicked are abomination to the Lord. They are, in the whole frame of their hearts, and in the whole tenor of their lives, contrary to the divine law. (Rom. viii. 7, 8.) "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God." And, (ver. 9,) this is the character of all who have not the spirit of Christ; and therefore the whole frame of their hearts, and the whole tenor of their lives, is infinitely odious, hateful, and ill-deserving in the sight of God; exactly agreeable to the import of the curse of the divine law. Therefore, when once a sinner's eyes come to be opened really to view things as they in fact are, his false hopes, his self-righteous claims, will be dropped in a moment; and the justice of God in his damnation be clear beyond dispute; and God's disposition to punish sin according to law, no longer appears as a blemish, but rather as a beauty in the divine character; and "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," not an ill, but rather a glorious perfection in the Deity. However, these views, and an answerable frame of heart, will not in the least diminish his desert of eternal damnation, any more than the penitence of a wilful murderer will exempt him from the gallows. For,—

III. If sin is an infinite evil, then he who is enlightened in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, believes the gospel with all his heart, repents, and is converted, still deserves, considered as in himself, and compared with the law of God, that perfect rule of right, eternal damnation as much as ever he did,* because his present goodness does not in the least counterbalance his former badness. Nay, instead of paying past debts, he runs continually deeper into debt; as he still falls short of that perfect love and obedience which he owes to God; and so, instead of deserving pardon for old sins, he merits damnation constantly by his new ones. There is, therefore, absolutely no hope in the case of a true penitent, but from the mere grace of God through Jesus Christ. On the foot of law, there is no more hope in the case of a penitent, than in the case of an impenitent sinner; because, according to law and strict justice, he deserves to be damned now as much as he did before; for his repentance, which is but of finite worth, when cast into the balance in opposition to his guilt, which is infinite, is lighter than if the smallest atom of matter were flung into one scale, and the whole material system into the other; for there is some proportion between the least atom of matter and the whole material system; but there is no proportion between finite and infinite. And therefore, as in the eye of law, so in the eye of an enlightened conscience, the most exalted virtue of the most eminent saint stands for nothing; that is, is absolutely of no weight at all in the least conceivable degree, to counterbalance for any one sin; and so he sensibly needs Christ and free grace along with the chief of sinners.

To deny this, would be, virtually, to give up the whole of divine revelation; for in this view the divine law threatens eternal death for any one transgression, without leaving any

* Some late writers, in their zeal against a self-righteous spirit, hardly dare allow faith to be an act, lest it should be made a righteousness of. Just as if a self-righteous heart could not make a righteousness of a passive as well as of an active faith, and be as proud of his passivity as the Pharisee was of his fasting twice in a week. Was this Paul's way to take down a proud, self-righteous heart, who was so skilful and mighty to pull down? No; far from it: he took quite another method, a method in its own nature apparently suited to answer the end. It was to hold forth the divine law in all its strictness, and with all its curses, as holy, just, and good; witness his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Not any distinction between active and passive was ever mentioned by him, or has the least tendency to humble a proud heart. But to view ourselves in the light of the divine law, will give us our true character, and let us see just what we deserve at the hands of God our Judge, and our absolute need of Christ and free grace. It was Paul's maxim, "The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." Nor can any man possibly see his need of Christ, but by the law; and the law considered as holy, just, and good. For to do honor to the law as such, was the design of Christ's mediation, and that without which his mediation had not been needful for the salvation of sinners; and by the law, the most holy and active saint needs Christ as much as the chief of sinners.

room for repentance to alleviate the sentence. The transgressor is doomed to eternal misery without hope; this is plain fact. (Gal. iii. 10.) And this law is declared to be holy, just, and good, to be just what in reason it ought to be; and in this view of it the Lawgiver judged it inconsistent with reason and justice, and therefore inconsistent with the honor of his righteous government, to exempt a sinner from the threatened punishment, in virtue of any atonement of less value than the blood of his own Son; another plain fact. (Rom. iii. 25, 26.) He who denies these two facts, must give up the whole of divine revelation; and to grant them, is to grant all that has been asserted.

It is possible that a sinner may be brought to repentance by divine grace before he is forgiven;* yea, it is certain that no sinner ever was pardoned till he did repent. (Luke xiii. 5. Acts iii. 19.) But it is impossible that a sinner ever should be justified under any other notion than as being ungodly. (Rom. iv. 5.) For one sin in the eye of the law, and so in the eye of God the Judge, denominates a man ungodly, and subjects him to eternal damnation. (Gal. iii. 10.) Nor can any future penitence make any imaginable satisfaction; he must be justified, therefore, by God, as being ungodly, or not at all.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," was the language of the Old Testament; and "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is the language of the New. Not that the penitent Jew, on the foot of law and justice, could by his repentance be exempted from death. Nay, just the contrary did the penitent Jew acknowledge, when he came before the altar, bringing a bull or a goat to die in his room. For "I have sinned, I deserve to die," was the import of his conduct. Nor, neither, that the penitent Christian does not deserve the damnation of hell, notwithstanding his penitence; for this, in the most explicit manner, is acknowledged, in asking pardon in the name of Christ. For if he is not so bad as to deserve eternal damnation, he does not need that pardon which the gospel offers; much less does he need the Son of God to die in his stead, that God may be just, and yet justify him. So that to ask pardon in the name of Christ, is the most explicit acknowledgment

* This all Antinomians deny; for as true repentance arises from love to God, and implies love to his law, they say, it is impossible to love God or his law, till first we know that our sins are forgiven; and so it is impossible that repentance should take place before forgiveness; of which more hereafter.

that eternal damnation is our due by law; and that the law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honorable by the obedience and death of the Son of God.*

If the divine law requires that we love God with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will; and if our original natural obligations to love and obey him are so great, that, according to reason and justice, we deserve eternal wrath for the least defect; and if we measure ourselves by this rule, and judge of our character and desert by this standard, instead of finding any thing about ourselves to recommend us to God, we shall feel that we are infinitely worthy of the divine wrath. And the more penitent any saint in this world is, the more

* Some of the chief maxims on which St. Paul reasons throughout his Epistle to the Galatians, to prove that no man can be justified on the foot of his own virtue, are these: "The divine law requires sinless perfection, on the penalty of eternal damnation for the least defect." (Chap. iii. 10.) "There is no other law given." (Ver. 21.) "If justification could have been obtained by this law, the death of Christ had been needless." (Chap. ii. 21.) And from these maxims he cuts off all self-righteous hopes by the roots. To assert, therefore, that there is a law given, by which a sinner may be justified in the sight of God on the foot of his own virtue, short of sinless perfection, and without any need of Christ's atonement, even on condition of sincere repentance, is flatly to contradict the apostle. It is surprising, therefore, to find so sagacious a writer as Mr. Sandeman declaring this with such great assurance; and equally surprising that he should think to prove his point from the 18th and 33d chapters of Ezekiel; when every pious Jew knew, that, let his repentance be ever so sincere, yet according to the whole tenor of the Mosiac dispensation, without shedding of blood there could be no remission. (Deut. xxvii. 26. Heb. ix. 22. See Letters on Theron, p. 89, 90.)

If it should be inquired, What led so learned a writer to commit such a blunder? It was in support of his leading design, the darling point in his scheme, namely, that there is forgiveness with God through Christ for impenitent sinners, while such, before any "act, exercise, or exertion of their minds whatsoever;" and consequently before repentance; a "passive belief" of which, he says, "quiets the guilty conscience, begets hope, and so lays a foundation for love." For if a penitent sinner may be justified on the foot of his own goodness, without any respect to Christ and his atonement, none can stand in any need of Christ and his atonement but impenitent sinners; and so his main point is proved. For the only design of Christ's death of consequence must be to procure pardon for impenitent sinners, remaining such. For if ever they should be brought to repentance, according to his scheme, they may be justified on the foot of their own goodness, without any need of Christ or his atonement; and accordingly his good man is never brought to true repentance. "All his godliness consists in love to that which first relieved him;" (Letters to Mr. Pike, p. 8;) and therefore his godliness does not at all consist in love to God's law, without which there can be no true repentance. And therefore he can by no means allow that the 119th Psalm gives the character of David, or is applicable to any other good man, because it abounds with such expressions of love to God's law. To whom then must it be applied? To Christ, he says; forgetting what the Psalmist had said, (ver. 67,) "Before I was afflicted, I went astray;" which is a full proof that Christ, who never went astray, is not the person spoken of. (Letters on Theron, p. 55, 117.)

But from Mr. Sandeman's manner of reasoning, (p. 88,) it is easy to foresee that he will object, that if repentance is before forgiveness, no child of Adam can be forgiven. For, according to him, this sets pardon "as high above the reach

sensible he will be that this is the truth. And, accordingly, St. Paul, who was doubtless the most humble, penitent, broken-hearted saint that ever lived, viewing things in this light, felt, after all his attainments, that he stood in as absolute need of Christ and free grace, as any other sinner in the world. "I through the law am dead to the law. I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." And in this view he strenuously asserted, that "by the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified in the sight of God." Not one more than another; not himself more than the vilest wretch on earth.

Wherefore, if saving faith implies, in its nature, repentance and conversion, and contains the seeds of every Christian grace,

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of one whose conscience is awake, as the perfections required by the divine law itself. It must cost me as much labor to come within the reach of it, as to conform my heart to the law of God. Of all corruptions of the gospel, this is the most dangerous." However, he may be told, that dangerous as he thinks it is, the gospel was thus corrupted, if he will call it by that name, by Christ and his apostles, who always taught, that repentance is before forgiveness, as will be proved in the sequel. And if he is for an easier way to heaven than Christ and his apostles taught, it is no good sign; rather, it is the grand characteristic of a popular preacher, how odious soever the name may sound in his ears. So our Savior declares, Matt. vii. 13, 14, 15.

If he should further object, that the plain design of the prophet Ezekiel was to convince the self-righteous Jews in Babylon that if they perished in their sins, the fault would be wholly in them, I readily grant it. And one way he takes to work this conviction in them, is to call upon them to repent, asserting that there is a sure connection between repentance and forgiveness; which was no new doctrine, as appears from Lev. xxvi. 40, 42. 1 Kings viii. 46, 50. Prov. xxviii. 13. Isa. lv. 7. Jer. iv. 4. The only question is, whether the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was mistaken, or not, in affirming, that under the Mosaic dispensation, without shedding of blood there was no remission. (Heb. ix. 22.)

Besides, if God could, consistent with the honor of his government, have granted remission of sins to a sincere penitent, without any atonement; by parity of reason, he might also as well have granted repentance, without any atonement; and so the death of Christ was wholly needless. Sinners might have had repentance and remission of sins, and eternal life, as well without as with it. And thus Christ is dead in vain, and Christianity overthrown, on Mr. Sandeman's scheme. For if the death of Christ was needless, the gospel, which brings us the news of his death, is a fiction; for it must have been foolishness, and not the wisdom of God. It must have been inconsistent with every divine perfection, for God to have given his Son to die, had his death been needless. Mr. Sandeman, therefore, must give up his present scheme, or give up the gospel, or be inconsistent. But how was it possible that Mr. S. should rightly understand and cordially believe the Scripture doctrine of atonement, while his mind was so full of prejudice against the divine law? Indeed, he has not expressed his enmity against the divine law in such a shocking manner as Mr. Cudworth has done; but to an attentive reader it may be plain, they both view it in the same point of light; in itself an ugly law. And all their love to God and his law arises merely from a belief or hope they are delivered from its curse; or rather, strictly speaking, they have no love to God or to his law; but, as Mr. S. accurately expresses, "all his godliness consists in love to that which first relieved him," viz., a belief there was forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, while such. This he loved; and this love is the whole of his religion.

yet it can have no influence into our justification in the sight of God, as our virtue; because, considered as such, it is of no weight to counterbalance our blame, if our blame be infinitely great; no weight at all. The least sand in an hour-glass would do more towards counterbalancing the whole material system, all put into one scale, than the faith, repentance, and all the other graces of the best saint in the world would, towards counterbalancing the smallest sin, if the smallest sin is an infinite evil. And if we say, "that the least sin is not an infinite evil," we must, to be consistent, give up the divine law, and with that, the whole of divine revelation.

We can be justified by faith, therefore, no otherwise than as faith is that, on our part, whereby we are united to Christ, and so become interested in him, in whom alone God is well pleased; whose righteousness and atonement alone are sufficient to satisfy for our guilt, and qualify us for the divine favor and eternal life. Even as a woman is interested in her husband's estate by marriage, not as it is an act of virtue in her to marry him;. but as hereby she is united to him, and becomes one with him. It is true, in the very act of marriage, in which a woman receives a man for her husband, and gives herself to him as his wife, all matrimonial duties are virtually implied; and "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him," is the sum of Christianity. But it is not the engagement of those matrimonial duties, nor is it the performance of them, which, under the notion of a virtue, entitles her to her husband's estate; she is interested in her husband's estate simply by virtue of the relation which takes place in marriage; they two then become one flesh; and so one common interest commences. (Eph. v. 32.) This is a great mystery, is a lively emblem of our union with Christ. For, by a true and lively faith, which, in contradistinction from a dead faith, contains every Christian grace in embryo, we are united to Christ, as the branch is to the vine, as the members of the body are to the head, as the wife is to her husband; in consequence of which union, and not for our goodness, we are accepted in God's beloved Son, and that simply on the account of his atonement and merits. And to use another of St. Paul's similitudes — a Jew had a title to an inheritance in the land of Canaan by birth; not because it was a virtue to be born of Jewish parents, but because he was thereby a child of Abraham. So we are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ; and if children, then heirs.* (Gal. iii. 26, 29.)

* See this subject treated at large, but with great accuracy, in Mr. Edwards's Sermon on Justification by Faith alone.

Some seem to think that faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, considered as our own goodness and virtue, give us an interest in Christ, and in the favor of God through him; which, to make the scheme consistent, supposes that the penitent sinner is considered as being in himself good, and that his goodness is of so great weight in the sight of God, as to counterbalance his badness, and so gives him an interest in Christ; which implies that his guilt is not acknowledged to be infinite; for if it were, it could not be imagined, that his goodness could be of any weight to counterbalance it. But if his guilt is not acknowledged to be infinite, the infinite excellency of the divine nature, and the justice of the law, are virtually denied; a full proof, that the import of Christ's death is not understood by him, and that his faith and repentance are not genuine. And graceless graces are but poor things for graceless men to make a righteousness of, if the noblest virtues of the most eminent saints are of no weight at all to counterbalance any one transgression of the divine law.

Others, on the contrary extreme, seem to think, that sinners are justified, not only as being ungodly in the eye of the law, but also as being impenitent and unconverted in the eye of the gospel. And these make the whole of religion to result from a persuasion of God's love to them. And so the infinite excellency of the divine nature, the infinite evil of sin, and the true import of the cross of Christ, are left out of their views; and the divine law, as a rule of life, is set aside; and a new kind of religion is substituted in the room of a conformity to the divine law; a kind of religion which has no holiness in its nature.

That there is a God, an absolutely perfect and infinitely glorious and amiable being, in himself infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and universal obedience, is the first principle of all religion, and the foundation on which that whole system of religion is built, which is contained in the Holy Scriptures. But this principle, how plain and how fundamental soever it is, is left out of every false scheme of religion. The occasion is this: Every false scheme of religion, formed in the fancy of a fallen creature, is contrived on purpose to suit, and so to give ease and comfort to graceless hearts. But every graceless heart is at enmity against the true God. Another God, of a character essentially different, must therefore be imagined, or a carnal heart cannot be suited, and so can never have ease; and this is done in every false scheme of religion. And so all false schemes of religion, in the Christian world, are, in reality, only so many various kinds of idolatry.

The angels in heaven love a God whose character they see it is to hate sin as an infinite evil, and punish it accordingly, exemplified before their eyes in the divine conduct towards their ancient associates, for their first transgression. Adam, in innocency, loved a God whose character he believed it was to hate sin as an infinite evil, and punish it accordingly, held forth to his own view, in that law, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And all who understand the gospel, see its glory, and believe it to be true, love a God, whose character they see it is to hate sin as an infinite evil, and punish it accordingly; and this character is set before their eyes, in the most striking point of light, on the cross of Christ, and in the transactions of the final judgment. And all those who do not love this character of God, do not love the true God. Therefore, for a sinner to love the true God, is, at the same time, to judge and condemn, to hate and abhor, his own character, as being infinitely odious. We can have not so much as one good thought of the divine character, without giving up our own as infinitely abominable. The moment we begin to think that God's character is good, we begin to look upon our own as infinitely bad. For if it is a beautiful thing in God eternally to damn such as we are, it must be because we are infinitely odious and ill deserving. And if it is not an amiable thing in God to hate and punish sin, as in fact he does, there is no moral beauty in his nature; for one bad property, entirely approved, and constantly exercised, must spoil any moral character, and render it, on the whole, entirely devoid of moral beauty. But this point shall be taken into a more particular consideration in the following section.

SECTION VI.

VINDICTIVE JUSTICE AN AMIABLE PERFECTION IN THE DEITY; A BEAUTY IN THE DIVINE CHARACTER.

VINDICTIVE justice is that perfection in the divine nature whereby God is inclined to punish sin according to its desert. The degree of ill desert there is in sin, is determined by the penalty threatened in the divine law.

God's giving his Son to die in our stead, to redeem us from the curse of the law, has led some to think that God is not inclined to punish sin according to its desert; whereas his

inclination to punish sin according to its desert, induced him to give his Son to die in our stead. When Zaleucus made a law, that the adulterer should have both his eyes put out as the punishment of his crime, his inclination to punish adultery, according to what he supposed it deserved, induced him, in order to save his son, who had committed adultery, from losing both his eyes, to consent, that one of his own should be put out instead of one of his. And his consenting to this, and its being actually done, instead of arguing that he was not inclined to punish adultery according to its supposed desert, was really the fullest proof of his inclination so to do, that could have been given. Nor could the supreme King of the universe have given a clearer and stronger proof, that his inclination to punish sin according to its desert was well grounded, fixed, and unchangeable, than to give his own Son to suffer in the room of the sinner, altogether equivalent to what he was exposed to; to be made a curse, to redeem him from the curse. And the impenitent sinner may depend upon it, he shall not escape; "for if these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Vindictive justice in the Deity has nothing in its nature inconsistent with his infinite goodness; and his infinite goodness has nothing in its nature inconsistent with vindictive justice. All the divine perfections are harmonious. Nay, all the moral perfections of the Deity are really but one — *God is love.*

Love is the sum of that duty which God requires of us in the moral law. The moral law is a transcript of the moral perfections of the divine nature; therefore love is the sum of the moral perfections of the divine nature.

God is love. Love to being in general; chiefly to the first, the great, the infinite being, the fountain and source of all being; and secondarily, to finite beings; and love to virtue, to order, to harmony, in the intellectual system. And so all his nature is summed up in this edict, the fundamental law in his kingdom, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Which is suited to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and to bring all finite intelligences to feel and conduct towards him and one another, as is fit, in which also their highest happiness lies.

To break this fundamental law of his kingdom, is implicitly to turn enemy to being in general; to God, the infinitely great and glorious being, to the system, to virtue, to order, to harmony; in a word to all good. Love itself, therefore, as it exists in the Deity, who is at the head of the universe, and

whose office it is to govern the world, is a consuming fire with respect to sin. And armed with almightiness, and directed by infinite wisdom, is immutably determined to bear testimony against it, as an infinitely odious, hateful, ill-deserving thing. And so the words of the law express the temper of God's heart. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things." But this fury and wrath is nothing but love. This curse to the sinner is love to being in general, that is, love to God, and to the best good of the universe. As when a wise and righteous monarch puts a traitor to death, it is not because he delights in the death of his subjects, or takes pleasure in their pain, simply considered; but it is because he delights in the honor and safety of his crown, and the general good of his kingdom; and all his loyal subjects, who are affected towards his crown and kingdom as he is, will see a beauty in his conduct.*

For many reasons private revenge is altogether improper and unfit; not that executing righteous vengeance is in itself a bad thing. We strictly forbid private revenge among our children. "If your brother strikes you, you shall not strike him again," says the father; "but tell me, and I will take care of the matter." So parents order in their little kingdoms, and all the

* Will see a beauty in his conduct, and yet not "delight in the misery" of their fellow-creatures; and so we may see the beauty of vindictive justice, and be affected accordingly, and yet "not delight in our own eternal destruction." Indeed, if an earthly monarch required his subjects, on pain of death, to do what was in its own nature "utterly impossible," not through the badness of their hearts, but as being inconsistent with the constitution of reasonable creatures; then, as in this case, no punishment would be deserved; so he could have no motive to punish his subjects, unless he delighted himself in their destruction. And so no beauty could be seen in a monarch's inflicting pain in such a case, unless we suppose it beautiful in him to love the misery of his subjects. And for one doomed to death under such a monarch, to see a beauty in his conduct, would, I own, be the same thing, as to love his own misery. And this seems to be Mr. Cudworth's view of the divine character, as exhibited in his law; to love which he thinks is the same thing as to "love our own eternal destruction." Mr. Cudworth's notions of the Deity are surprisingly inconsistent. One while, God is supposed to be so much made up of malevolence, that to esteem his character beautiful, is "to love our own eternal destruction." And to love this God, is pronounced "utterly impossible;" yea, "contrary to the law of God;" and yet the indisputable duty of mankind; but a duty which none ever did, or ever will, or ever lawfully can do. Another while, God is all made up of love to his creatures, only "disposed to make them happy, and to oppose what is contrary to their happiness;" and so of a character altogether lovely, even in the eyes of the vilest sinners, let them but believe "that God loves them in particular." And so here are two Gods; the one a cruel, hateful being, requiring, on pain of damnation, that we should do that which is, in its own nature, wicked, "contrary to the law of God." And this God it is "utterly impossible" to love. The other is a good and lovely being, who aims at nothing but our happiness; and only requires us to believe that he loves us, and in that belief love him again. And thus it was with the Manicheans in the early ages of the church; they maintained that there were two Gods, the God of the Old Testament, a cruel, hateful being; and the God of the New Testament, a good and lovely being. — *Further Defence*, p. 221, 226.

children in the family stand conscience convinced, when a naughty child is corrected by a wise and good father, that the father has done well; and all dutiful children will revere him the more, and love him the better for it. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," says the apostle; an exhortation as full of benevolence as any one in the New Testament; to which he adds, in the same spirit, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves." But why? Was vengeance a bad thing in the apostle's eyes? No; but they were not the proper persons. That matter belonged to the infinitely wise God, whose are all things in heaven and earth, and to whom the government of the world appertains. "For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord." It is God's province to execute vengeance, and it is a godlike, glorious thing in him to do it.

Wherefore, when Pharaoh, the type of finally impenitent sinners, (Rom. ix. 17, 22,) and his host lay overwhelmed in the Red Sea, Moses, inspired by Heaven, sang, "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously! Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods! Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness!" * (Exod. xv.) And when all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured and rebelled against the Lord on the return of the spies, for which they were by God doomed to fall in the wilderness, it was, in the eyes of the Holy One, so glorious and godlike a piece of conduct, that he said, "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Num. xiv. 21.) And when, in the days of Isaiah, God revealed his purpose for their

* *Glorious in holiness.* — Vindictive justice is a holy, and so a glorious perfection. The holiness of the divine nature inclines him to hate and punish sin. The great evil of sin consists in its being against God. Against thee, thee only have I sinned. (Ps. li. 4.) And it is chiefly in this view that God hates and punishes it; because it is a despising God, (2 Sam. xii. 10,) and it is a glorious thing in God to punish it in this view. Mr. Cudworth thinks, that there is no loveliness in any thing in God, but merely as it "tends to make us happy, and to oppose what is contrary to our happiness." (p. 221.) If God punishes sin merely for our good, it is lovely, let the punishment be so circumstanced, as to be an act of goodness and kindness to us, and it is beautiful, viewed in this light. But if it be viewed as an act of holiness, as an expression of God's regard to the honor of his great name, and hatred of sin as it is against God, then there is no loveliness in it; and why? Because we naturally love ourselves, but regard not the honor of his great name. And so, to take care of our interest appears beautiful to us; but to take care of the rights of the Godhead has no beauty in it. And so the atonement of Christ, on this hypothesis, has no beauty in it, considered as doing honor to God and to his law. And so all religion consists merely in selfish affections. And thus, when Pharaoh was punished for his crimes, it appeared beautiful to the carnal Israelites, as they were safe themselves, and as his destruction was for their interest; but when it came to their own turn, their hearts were full of hatred and heart-risings. However, the divine conduct, in their punishment, was as beautiful as in the punishment of the Egyptians; and nothing but criminal blindness could prevent its appearing to them in this light. To be sure, it appeared in this light in the eyes of the Holy One of Israel.

many crimes, to give up the Jews to blindness, and deafness, and hardness, till the land should be utterly desolate, the inhabitants of heaven are represented as in an ecstasy, crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isai. vi.) And when the children of Moab and Ammon, the Edomites and Philistines, and all the neighboring nations around the holy land, who, from spite to the true God, and to the true religion, rejoiced in the destruction of Jerusalem, and captivity of the Jews; when, I say, they are by God devoted to destruction, it is constantly represented as a conduct worthy of the Holy One of Israel, and to his honor, by the continual repetition of these words, "and they shall know that I am the Lord," along through eight chapters together, from Ezek. xxv. And concerning Babylon, say the pious Jews, guided by inspiration, "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." (Ps. cxxxvii. 9.) And when mystical Babylon shall sink as a millstone into the sea, under the vengeance of the Almighty, and thousands be sent to hell at once all heaven is represented as resounding with loud hallelujahs, while the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever. (Rev. xix.) So that nothing can be plainer, than that vindictive justice is a glorious perfection in the divine nature, a beauty in his character, in the sight of holy beings, through the intellectual system. But, —

I. If vindictive justice is a glorious and amiable perfection in the Deity, then the whole dark side of things, as some writers phrase it, in his moral government of the universe, is full of light, glory, and beauty. The ejection of the sinning angels out of heaven down to eternal darkness and despair, turning our first parents out of paradise, and dooming them and all their race to death, and the final sentence to be passed on apostate angels and apostate men at the day of judgment, are all perfect in beauty. The divine character, as exhibited to view in these facts, is altogether glorious, and infinitely worthy of love; for it is a glorious thing in God thus to punish sin according to its desert. Therefore it can be owing to nothing but criminal blindness, to the spirit of a rebel, of an enemy, in any of God's subjects, that the glory of his character, as thus exhibited, does not shine into their hearts. It is a full proof they are unattached to the honor of God, and to the welfare of his holy kingdom, and care only for their own private interest. And therefore no sooner is a sinner renewed by the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, but he begins to see the beauty of vindictive justice, and to be affected accordingly. The law, as a minis-

tration of death, now begins to appear glorious. For now he begins to see things as in fact they be; for now his eyes are opened.*

* And in this view my Theron is made to say, "Let all heaven forever love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although I receive my just desert and perish forever." But says Mr. Cudworth, "This is a species of love beyond what Adam had in paradise, beyond the apostles, the Scripture saints, and even Jesus Christ himself." (p. 224.) Strange! What! does not Jesus Christ look upon it as a glorious thing in his Father to punish sin according to its desert? Does not he think his Father worthy to be loved and adored by all the heavenly hosts, although he does so? and will not all holy beings cry, "Amen, Hallelujah," at the last day, when they see the law put in execution? And pray, what is their motive? Is it the beauty of vindictive justice, or is it merely because they are safe, and care for none but themselves? If the beauty of vindictive justice is the motive, then they all view things to perfection, in the same light in which a sinner begins in great imperfection to view them, when his eyes first begin to be opened. But if vindictive justice is not a beauty in the divine character in their eyes, and if they cry, "Amen, Hallelujah," merely because they are safe themselves, and care not what becomes of others, as must be the case on Mr. Cudworth's scheme, let him consider the consequences; consequences which will overthrow the whole of divine revelation, as will presently appear. And to quote texts of Scripture to prove a point subversive of the whole Scripture scheme, is certainly to pervert them. Besides, Mr. Cudworth is obliged to grant, first, that the divine law does in fact require of all mankind, without exception, that very kind of love to God which he condemns in Theron. Secondly, that this law is holy, just, and good. And, thirdly, that to deny the goodness of this law, is to overthrow Christianity. (p. 226, 230.) And if in regeneration and repentance our eyes begin to be opened to see things as they be, and our hearts to be affected accordingly, then Theron is justified out of Mr. Cudworth's own mouth; and he has no way to avoid this consequence, but to contradict himself, and implicitly give up Christianity, in affirming, that the divine law, in requiring love to God before the pardon of sin, requires, first, what implies "love to our own eternal destruction;" and so, secondly, what is "utterly impossible;" yea, thirdly, what is in its own nature unreasonable; "inconsistent with the original constitution of reasonable creatures;" and so, fourthly, what is in its own nature sinful, "contrary to the law of God." And thus he makes the divine law unreasonable and wicked, that he may justify the sinner in his non-conformity to it. And while he justifies the sinner, he renders needless the atonement of Christ, regeneration, repentance, and pardon, in this case. And thus the whole gospel is overthrown. To avoid this consequence, he turns short about, and affirms, that the sinner "ought to love God, and is self-condemned if he does not," "utterly impossible and contrary to the law of God," as it is. And in the midst of all this confusion and self-contradiction, he introduces the death of Christ to solve the difficulty, by delivering us from the curse of this good wicked law, and grant a pardon in the midst of this self-justification and enmity, thereby to pacify our minds, and give us a good thought of that God, whose character before it was "utterly impossible" to love. And this is all the regeneration he will allow of. And he perverts every text of Scripture he comes across, to support this inconsistent, self-contradictory scheme of sentiments; meanwhile, nothing can be plainer, than that, if God was amiable in the eyes of Adam in paradise, in threatening to punish sin so severely; if he was amiable in the eyes of Christ, in persisting in this disposition after the fall; if to do honor to this character of his Father, the Son of God incarnate died on the cross; if all true believers view Christ in this light, and love him as being thus his father's friend; then Mr. Cudworth's scheme stands condemned "by Adam in paradise, by the apostles, by all the Scripture saints, with Jesus Christ himself at their head;" who could not have been bribed, by all the joys set before him, to have declared his Father's righteousness, had he viewed the divine law in the light Mr. Cudworth does; an unreasonable, wicked law.

II. If vindictive justice is a glorious and amiable perfection, then it was a glorious and amiable thing in God to bruise him, and put his soul to grief, who had espoused our cause, and appeared as our representative, although he were his own Son; and it was a glorious thing in the Son of God incarnate, to say, "Thy will be done." But if vindictive justice is not glorious, there is no glory in the cross of Christ; and where no glory is, no glory can be seen.

III. If vindictive justice is an amiable, glorious perfection, then the grace of God in the gift of his Son was free grace indeed. If I was, in fact, so criminal, so infinitely odious and ill-deserving, that it had been even a glorious piece of conduct in God to have damned me for my sins, the grace which provides me relief is mere pure grace; pure grace indeed. God was so far, so very far from being obliged in justice to help me, that it had been a glorious act of justice, if God had said, "Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The grace, therefore, which provides relief, is free and glorious grace; and as the freeness and greatness of the grace arises from this view of the case, so it is only in this view of the case that the freeness and greatness of the grace can be seen. Therefore those who are wholly blind to the beauty of vindictive justice, are wholly blind to the nature and glory of the grace of the gospel. And therefore that idea of free grace, which ravishes an Antinomian heart, is a mere imagination, formed in his own fancy, and not the true grace of the gospel.

IV. If vindictive justice is a glorious and amiable perfection in the divine nature, then God is altogether lovely. There is not one blemish in his character: his character, viewed in every point of light, is perfect in beauty. That is, he is, in fact, what he claims to be, *by nature God.* Therefore our disaffection to the Deity is perfectly groundless, and we have no cloak for our sin, but are absolutely without excuse, our mouths stopped, and we guilty before God; even prior to a consideration of the grace of the gospel.

And, therefore, if now, after we have the gospel revelation, in which we are invited, kindly and earnestly invited, to return to God in the name of Christ, with a promise of divine forgiveness, and even of eternal life through him, we do not return and become heartily reconciled, we shall deserve an aggravated damnation indeed. The heathen world, who never heard of the grace of the gospel, may, for their disaffection to the divine character, which is perfect in beauty, be, with Tyre and Sidon, justly damned; but we, with Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Caper-

naum, shall deserve a damnation aggravated beyond expression. "There shall be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

To say that vindictive justice is not a glorious and amiable perfection, is subversive of all religion, natural and revealed.

If vindictive justice is not a glorious and amiable perfection, then there is one blemish in the divine character, one bad property in the divine nature, which yet, it is plain from the whole tenor of his conduct, that God heartily approves of and loves; which therefore must spoil his whole character, and render it on the whole an unamiable character; a character that cannot be heartily liked and cordially loved. For one bad property entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will ruin any moral character, and render it devoid of all moral beauty.

If it was a bad thing in God to cast out the rebel angels, as he did, to eternal pains, the elect angels can never forgive it: but must eternally look on their tortures as the effect of something bad in the Deity, and stand ready to justify their blasphemies, and so will really be on the devil's side, notwithstanding all the bounties of Heaven to them. For the bounty of a tyrant can never win the esteem of noble and generous minds. And how must the death of an incarnate God, on this hypothesis, fill all holy beings with horror. Such a sacrifice as this to tyranny, is beyond imagination dreadful! All the bounties of Heaven to the elect from among mankind, can never reconcile them to such a character, unless we suppose them to be absolutely selfish, void of all goodness, while they forever behold their fellow-creatures, their neighbors, their brethren, their sisters, their sons, their daughters, crying, weeping, wailing, gnashing their teeth, under eternal tortures, all the effect of something bad in the Deity.

So that, if vindictive justice in the divine nature is not amiable and glorious, there is no beauty at all in the divine character, and he never can be loved. And so there is an everlasting end to all religion in the intellectual system; for where there is no love to God, there is no religion.

To say that vindictive justice is no part of God's moral character, is to give up the Old and New Testament, both at once, as well as to contradict a thousand appearances in common providence. And so is it to plunge into downright infidelity, and is little or nothing short of the grossest atheism.

So that we have our choice to approve the divine character, as it stands in the Bible, as being without a blemish, perfect in beauty; or to turn infidels, and sink down into a total uncertainty about every thing in the moral system. To do the first, is the introduction into the Christian life. To do the latter, is

to begin to feel that blackness of darkness, which is to be the portion of God's enemies to all eternity; or, at least, it is an introduction to it.

Objection. "It is true God's character, as exhibited to view in the law, is not an amiable, nor can it be loved; but his character, as exhibited in the gospel, is altogether lovely." *

Answer. A hateful character, and a lovely character, are two characters essentially different; nay, contrary to each other. But two characters essentially different, cannot belong to that one God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. To look upon the character the divine law gives of God as odious; to look upon the character the gospel gives of God as amiable; and to hate the God of the law, and to love the God of the gospel; is a kind of religion which puts one in mind of the Manichean scheme, in ancient times; who professed to believe "that there were two gods, the God of the Old Testament, an evil, cruel, hateful being, and the God of the New Testament, a good, kind, lovely being." And if this scheme is not openly espoused by any of the various sects of Christians in the present age, yet it seems to be the secret spirit and soul of all the false schemes of religion now in vogue. But all these schemes are, in fact, no better than infidelity. For if Jesus of Nazareth did not heartily love the character of the God of Israel, as exhibited in his law, he did not come from the God of Israel, he was not the promised Messiah, he was an impostor. For on this hypothesis, he was no friend to the God of Israel; but plainly on the side of his enemies, his rebellious subjects. And his mediation, in this view, was an affront to the Deity, an infinite reflection on his character; and so can be of no avail to his followers; and what is all this better than infidelity?

* The design of every false scheme of religion, is to render the divine character agreeable to the taste of a carnal heart: but to every carnal heart, vindictive justice appears not a beauty, but a blemish; and such a blemish as spoils God's whole character, and renders it "utterly impossible" to love him. Till then carnal men leave vindictive justice out of their idea of God, at least with reference to themselves; they cannot love God, or "conceive any loveliness in his nature." Some false schemes declare that vindictive justice is no part of the divine character. God intends to make all his creatures finally happy. Other false schemes declare, that, although it is a part of the divine character, yet it is not to be loved. I am to view God as one that loves me, and merely in that view am I to love him: but to love vindictive justice is "utterly impossible." Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, imply, in their nature, a sense of the beauty of vindictive justice. And so the true Christian loves God's real character; while a wrong idea of God excites the love of every unregenerate man. A kind of love to such a kind of a God, as is consistent with reigning enmity against the true God. (Rom. viii. 7.) "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

But if Jesus of Nazareth did heartily love the character of the God of Israel, as exhibited in his law, and died to assert this character to be good, and do it honor, then no man can be his disciple, but he who loves that character too. To hate that character, is to be an enemy to the cross of Christ. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

When Christ was upon earth, the Pharisees, the most religious sect of people then in the world, joined very unanimously to hate his character, pretending at the same time great love to the God of Israel. But our Savior and his apostles insisted upon it, that if they really loved God, they would love him; and if they hated him, it was a full proof they hated God; because both their characters were alike. (John viii. 10, 29, 48; xv. 21, 24; xvi. 1, 2, 3. 1 John ii. 22, 23.) But the Pharisees had quite lost the true meaning of the law of Moses; so that with the greatest truth it might be said, that they did not believe Moses' writings, (John v. 47;) and consequently had lost a right idea of the true God, as exhibited in his writings. Meanwhile they had formed a new scheme of religion in their fancy, and got themselves to believe it to be the same that was taught by Moses, a scheme which justified such characters as theirs; and as was their scheme of religion, such was their notion of God. And having thus made themselves a God of a character to suit their own hearts, this God they loved. But they hated Christ, who was the express image of the true God. A full proof they hated the true God himself. Even so now also it is in this present age. Christ has been gone to heaven a long time, and the true sense of his gospel has been in a manner totally lost by many, who have professed a great regard to his name; and new Christs, and new gospels, have been invented, more agreeable to the taste of an apostate world, but of a character essentially different from the God of Israel. And so it is come to pass that men are prepared to distinguish between the character of God as exhibited in the law, and the character of God as exhibited in the gospel; and hate one and love the other; as characters essentially different; nay, even contrary the one to the other; not knowing that it was the very design of the mediatorial office and work of Christ to assert his Father's character, as exhibited in the law, to be an absolutely perfect character, without spot or blemish; although it is expressly affirmed, that he was set forth to be a propitiation for this very end, to declare his Father's righteousness; or, in the language of the prophet, to "magnify the law and make it honorable."

I pray that it may be considered, that if vindictive justice

is essential to the divine character, and if it is in its own nature a bad thing, an unamiable property, that this one blemish will spoil God's whole character; and it will be impossible for any holy being in the universe to love him. None can love him but stupid, selfish creatures, who believe that he loves them, and who care not what becomes of others. For, if it must have rendered God's character hateful to have punished me according to his law, it must, for the same reason, render it hateful to punish any other according to his law. So that, on this hypothesis, if I am saved, yet God's character must appear odious in my eyes to all eternity, unless he save all others. So I shall hate God's character in heaven, while I view the torments of the damned; and all the love I shall have to him, will be simply from a selfish, narrow principle; because he has elected, and loved, and saved me; for I can see no beauty in his character. For in fact there is none, if vindictive justice be a bad and an unamiable property, for one bad property entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will render any character entirely devoid of moral beauty. Therefore, —

The rapturous joys of sinners, who are blind to the beauty of the divine character as exhibited in his law, arising merely from a belief that God loves them and will save them, have nothing of the nature of holiness or love to God in them; nor will this kind of religion, although raised to the highest perfection, in the least qualify a man to live in heaven. To view things as they do there, would kill this kind of religion in a moment. A sight of the state of the damned would put an end to all their good thoughts of God, in the twinkling of an eye. And while heaven, ravished with the beauty of the divine conduct, resounds with hallelujahs, they would begin to cry, "No, no, he is a tyrant! see, yonder is my neighbor, my brother, my child, in torments!" And away would they flee to their proper company, side with them, and join in their blasphemies; unless we suppose this sort of converts, should they come to heaven, so entirely destitute of any thing like benevolence, as to feel perfectly easy at the misery of others, merely because they do not care for any but themselves.

If vindictive justice were not glorious, it would be impossible, that the Son of God incarnate should make such a glorious appearance as he will at the day of judgment; he would rather be dressed in sackcloth — impossible, that he who wept over Jerusalem, would now, without the least reluctance, pronounce the final sentence on the wicked; and impossible, that this sentence should be succeeded with unmixed, endless joys, among angels and saints, beings perfect in benevolence, and the most generous goodness.

But neither Christ, nor angels, nor saints, will, at that day, look on the controversy which has subsisted between God and his rebellious subjects, as it is generally looked upon now among mankind. God's infinite worthiness of supreme love and honor, and universal obedience, and the infinite evil of sin, will then be seen; and the wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness of all God's ways will be brought to light; and the unreasonable disaffection and inexcusable obstinacy of an apostate race will appear in their true colors. The whole history of mankind will be opened, and all the opposition made to the truth, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Christ, nay, to the blood of the last martyr, will be brought into the account, with all the despisings of the divine authority, threatenings, warnings, calls, etc. So that all holy beings will be fully and perfectly satisfied, nay, perfectly pleased, with the last sentence on the wicked. And it will be so far from lessening their happiness, that it will give them new additional joys; and they will all join in saying, "Amen, hallelujah; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; and true and righteous are his judgments. And again they will say, Hallelujah; while the smoke of their torments ascends forever and ever." And all this in perfect consistence with the purest benevolence. Yea, all this will be the native result of benevolence, of love to God, and to the general good of the universe; as the wicked will be viewed as enemies to being in general, to God, to the universe, and to all good.

SECTION VII.

GOD, WHO IS THE SUPREME, ALL-SUFFICIENT GOOD, CAN, CONSISTENTLY WITH HIS HONOR, AND IS WILLING TO, BECOME A GOD AND FATHER, AND EVERLASTING PORTION, TO ALL WHO RETURN TO HIM THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

That God is an absolutely perfect, and so an infinitely glorious and amiable being, is the first article of faith in the creed of every true Christian. And the second, which, in point of importance, is like unto it, is, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. On these two articles hang all the law and the gospel, all the doctrines of natural and revealed religion. As it is written, (John xvii. 3,) "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." A variety of consequences from these two

fundamental truths have been already pointed out; and we now go on to add, —

I. If God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely amiable and glorious being, of necessity he must be the supreme, all-sufficient good.

II. If Jesus of Nazareth is his Son, it is equally certain that he can, consistent with his honor, and is willing to, become a God and Father, and everlasting portion, to all who return to him through Jesus Christ.

1. If God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, of necessity he must be the supreme, all-sufficient good. He must be the supreme good; for it implies a contradiction to say, that any thing can be better than the best; and God cannot be better than he is. Absolute perfection cannot be more perfect than it is. Infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, armed with almighty power, constitute a character absolutely perfect; a beauty without a blemish, a beauty infinitely bright. In the knowledge, love, and enjoyment of such a being, therefore, must consist the greatest possible happiness.

And at the same time, the absolute perfection of the divine nature renders the Deity infinitely amiable and delightful in himself; the whole universe exists by him, is entirely in his hands, and under his government, and at his control. In him, all "live, and move, and have their being." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." And "his throne is established in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." So that he is the fountain and source of all being, possessed of authority absolutely supreme, the sum and source of all good, and therefore in the highest sense absolutely all-sufficient. To have God for our God, is infinitely better than to be ourselves set up at the head, and made lords of the whole universe.

There are things of an earthly nature which are good in their places, as health, food, raiment, friends, etc., which we receive from God, the original Lord of all things; and for which therefore we ought to be thankful to him, and improve to his glory. But they are not fit to be the portion of our souls. And if we set our hearts upon them as our supreme good, we are guilty of idolatry. And if we set them up for our God, and bow down our souls to them, we act as stupid and sinful a part as those who, of old, bowed down to idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. And when we come to die, they will prove as insufficient for our happiness, as the gods of the heathen

did for theirs. Nay, the society of angels and saints in heaven, leave God out of the account, would by no means afford that refined and sublime, that complete and stable happiness we need, to give us full and perfect satisfaction; much less will the society of saints on earth. Nay, leave God out of the account, and angels and saints, and the whole universe, would sink into nothing in a moment. So that God is not only the supreme, all-sufficient good, but, strictly speaking, the sum total of all good. (Ps. lxxiii. 25.) Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

Therefore, to love, honor, and obey the Deity, as the divine law requires, is as much our privilege as it is our duty; and nothing but our criminal blindness to the absolute perfection, to the infinite glory and amiableness of the divine nature, prevents its appearing so to our souls.

Suppose a father, of an unblemished character, of consummate wisdom, the owner of a large estate, at the head of a numerous family. For the children to love his character, respect his person, to put an implicit trust in the wisdom of his conduct relative to family affairs; to rejoice in his supremacy, power, and authority over his household; and that all the estate is in his hands, and all his family dependent on him, and in their temper and behavior to be all dependence, subjection and obedience, is as much their privilege as it is their duty. And nothing but a criminal state of mind can prevent its appearing so in their eyes. To be disaffected to such a father's character, to be discontented under his government, to rise in rebellion, to go and leave his house, is as imprudent and foolish as it is undutiful and wicked; and must appear so to the prodigal child, as soon as ever he comes to himself. And now to repent and return, and become a dutiful child, must appear not only the fittest, but the happiest thing in the world. And to have such a man, with such an estate in his hands, for a father, is better for a child than to have all the estate put into his own hands, and to be rendered supreme and independent. So for us sinners to repent and be converted, to return to God through Jesus Christ, and to have him for our God and Father, is better, yea, infinitely better, than to have all the universe put into our hands. And to love his character, delight in his exaltation, rejoice in his supremacy and independency, and in the infinite wisdom and absolute perfection of his universal government, and to be full of holy fear and reverence, submissive, resigned, obedient, as dutiful children, is not only an honor due to God from us, but also our highest privilege and happiness. It is heaven on earth. It is even the beginning of eternal life in

the soul; and nothing but criminal blindness can prevent its appearing so to us all. (Ps. lxxvii. 22.) "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee."

"I will be their God;" as it is in its own nature the greatest possible good, so it is the grand blessing of the gospel, in which all the rest finally terminate. (Heb. iv. 10. Rev. xxi. 7.) Regeneration, repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification, considered under the notion of gospel privileges and blessings, all summarily consist in our being delivered from an everlasting separation, in temper and state, from the Deity, with its consequences; and brought to an everlasting enjoyment of God, as our father, friend, and portion. By the fall we lost God, we lost his image and favor, we lost a heart to love him, and a right to enjoy him; we became disaffected to him, and we forsook him, and were doomed to depart, to be forever given up to the power of sin, and to be monuments of the divine wrath forever. In regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification, we are recovered to the image and favor of God, to a heart to love him, and a right to enjoy him, and to the actual love and enjoyment of him as our God, our supreme good, our father, friend, and portion. "Everlasting" or "eternal life" is the phrase most commonly used to express summarily all the blessings of the gospel, in contrast with "eternal death," the wages of the first, the wages of every sin. (John iii. 15, 16, 36; iv. 14; v. 27; vi. 40, 47. Rom. vi. 23, etc.) And our Savior tells us wherein eternal life consists. (John xvii. 3.) "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." God the Father, who is eminently Father and Lord of heaven and earth, (not exclusive of the Son and Spirit,) is considered as the sum and fountain of all perfection and of all good. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Christ is considered as the way to the Father, the only way in which sinners can come to the enjoyment of him. (John xiv. 6.) "I am the way; no man cometh to the Father but by me." And the Holy Spirit is considered as the person by whom we are quickened, raised from the dead, and brought to God through Jesus Christ. (Eph. ii. 18.) Through Christ we have access by the Spirit unto the Father. And when the work of redemption is completely finished, and all the redeemed brought to heaven, God will be all in all through eternal ages. (1 Cor. xv. 28.) Therefore, "I will be their God," is the grand blessing of the gospel, in which all the rest finally terminate. This, therefore, is in an eminent manner

that "treasure in a field," that "pearl of great price," for which every divinely enlightened soul willingly and joyfully sells all things. God himself, to be loved and enjoyed through Jesus Christ, is the royal feast, shadowed and represented by the marriage a king made for his son, which was so slighted and despised by those who were called, and kindly and earnestly invited to come. (Matt. xxii.) And this is that bread to be eaten in the kingdom of heaven, that great supper, from coming to which they all with one consent desired to be excused. (Luke xiv.) This is that recompense of reward, the everlasting enjoyment of God, which Moses had in view through all his trials, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. (Heb. xi. 26, 27.) And by the way, this is the true reason, that the great feast (Matt. xxii.) was slighted, and the great supper (Luke xiv.) despised by the Jews, who all reckoned on going to heaven, as much as other carnal people do. Even, this is the true reason, that the happiness proposed in the gospel, is as much disrelished by carnal hearts, as the holiness which is there urged. For the happiness is a holy happiness, a kind of happiness which an unholy heart entirely disrelishes; therefore "they made light of it, and went their ways." They looked upon it as a burden, and desired to be excused. For in strict truth there is no such heaven as carnal hearts imagine, when ravished to think their sins are pardoned, and heaven their own. Their God, their Christ, their heaven, are all the fruit of their own imaginations, and Satan's delusions; for the heaven of the gospel carnal men would not have, if they might; yea, they perfectly disrelish it, they absolutely reject it, they obstinately refuse it, and many will sooner kill the messengers who invite them, than come to the feast. Thus our Savior states the case. (Matt. xxii. 6.) But to return: —

If the absolute perfection, the infinite glory and amiableness of the supreme Governor and Lord of the universe, renders him the supreme and all-sufficient good, then, as soon as our eyes are opened to see his absolute perfection, his ineffable glory and beauty, he will begin to appear such to our souls, for now we begin to see things as they be. For this is what is meant by our eyes being opened. And if God does appear such to our souls; to quit all idols, to return to him, to love him, to live to him, to be for him, to have him for our God and Father, and portion, in time and to eternity, will be esteemed the highest possible privilege, if we may.

But the same absolute perfection and infinite glory and beauty

of the divine nature, which render God the supreme good, render him infinitely worthy of supreme love and delight, and our disaffection infinitely criminal, and us infinitely ill-deserving; so that it would be even a glorious act in God to banish us forever from his presence. Nor, according to his holy law, that perfect rule of right, is any thing else to be expected. Nor in this view is there any hope in our case; yea, it does not appear how he can, consistent with his honor, do any less than cast off forever creatures so infinitely vile. But, —

2. If Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, it is certain, beyond all dispute, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world can, consistently with his honor, and is willing to, become a God and Father, and everlasting portion, to any, the vilest and the worst, that shall return to him through Jesus Christ. For, if the absolutely perfect being has given his own Son, of equal glory with himself, to be incarnate, to obey and die in the room of sinners, to magnify his law, and make it honorable, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; and if he has finished the work appointed him to do; and if, in testimony of his Father's acceptance and full satisfaction, he hath raised him from the dead, yea, set him at his own right hand in heaven, where he appears in the character of a great High Priest, with his own blood, and ever liveth to make intercession; in consequence of which, by the decree of Heaven, repentance and remission of sins are ordered to be preached to all nations in his name, and whosoever will may come, however vile and ill-deserving; yea, all are invited to come, and prayed and beseeched to be reconciled to God, who is represented as ready to receive the returning sinner, as the Father was to receive his returning prodigal; if all this is true, — and all this is true if Jesus is the Messiah, — then beyond all doubt God can, consistently with his honor, and is willing to, receive to favor, and to become a God and Father to all, whoever they be, that shall return to him through Jesus Christ. Wherefore, as it appears to the enlightened soul the fittest and happiest thing imaginable to return to the God of glory, as his rightful Lord and supreme good, to live to him and upon him, if he may; and as, in this view of things, he is assured that liberty is granted to any, the vilest and the worst, to return through Jesus Christ; so now, with the prodigal son in Luke xv., he does return, and find acceptance. And thus the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ begins eternal life in the soul, agreeable to our Savior's words in John xvii. 3. "This is life eternal,

that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

And from these truths, thus briefly stated, we may see how great the good offered in the gospel is; how free it is offered; the sin and madness of rejecting it; the absurdity of believing we have a title to heaven, when the very heaven offered is rejected with abhorrence.

I. The good offered in the gospel is of infinite worth and value, yea, it is the sum and substance of all good in the universe; for even God himself offers to be our God, and father, and portion. This was originally man's supreme good in paradise. This was forfeited by our apostasy. The second Adam, our near kinsman, has redeemed the inheritance, and opened a way for us to come to a lawful possession. The curse of the law doomed us to an everlasting separation from God, but the blood of Christ has opened a way for us to come to the everlasting enjoyment of him.

In heaven they enjoy God as the supreme good; they are ravished with the glories of his nature, charmed with the beauties of his character, exquisitely delighted in his exaltation, in his supremacy, in his universal perfect government, crying, "Holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory;" and they are as flames of fire, all love, life, activity, in the delightful service of their glorious King. Even so here on earth, we, who have been outcasts, are invited to return, come home, and be reconciled to the God of glory, the God that made us, and view his nature and all his conduct as they do, become of the same temper, and members of the same family, and join in like holy employments and pleasures. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." There is a great High Priest entered into heaven with his own blood; and in his name, we, who deserve to be numbered with the damned, are invited to come with boldness within the vail, and to begin our heaven on earth. To this feast we are invited to come, and we may eat and drink as much as we please. We have full and free liberty to have access to the fountain of all good, the God of glory, the Supreme Lord of the universe, to view the beauty of his character, to be charmed with the glories of his nature, to rejoice that he is God over all blessed forever, that he reigns and will forever reign, that his government is universal and absolutely perfect; and through Jesus Christ, we may come and put our trust under the shadow of his wings, and in his name look up to him for all things, and love and cleave to him, and delight in him with all our hearts; and devote our whole

lives to his service, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; pressing toward the mark for the prize (the everlasting enjoyment of God) of our high calling of God in Jesus Christ. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ; and the end will be eternal life. And, —

II. All this is offered freely, without money and without price, to us, infinitely unworthy and ill-deserving, through Jesus Christ. "Come, for all things are now ready." * Yea,

* If we are invited to a feast by a neighbor, the invitation gives us a good right to go. And if God invites us to repent, return, and be reconciled to him, the God of glory, the supreme good, through Jesus Christ, and enjoy him as the portion of our souls, the heavenly feast, it gives us good right to do so. Even as good a right as the Israelites had to take and eat the manna which lay around their tents. Of this there can be no dispute. But all these invitations give us no right nor warrant to believe that our sins are pardoned and God reconciled to us while impenitent, while we refuse to come to the feast to which we are invited, and even despise and hate it. Had God expressly declared, "If you will believe your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven. Here I offer you pardon as your own, impenitent as you are: only believe I thus offer it, and that this offer makes it yours, so as that you may with a good warrant believe it is your own, and enjoy the comfort of it as such, and according to your faith so shall it be to you. I pray you, I beseech you, believe and take it home to yourself, impenitent as you are, and you never shall be disappointed;" — had God thus declared, it had been another case; but there is not one tittle in the Bible that looks that way; yea, instead of this, God has expressly declared, "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." Therefore repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

And this may help the weakest Christian to see through the mist, that Mr. Cudworth raises. Note, the grand objections against their notions of faith, Mr. Cudworth has done nothing to remove; yea, he has not had courage to look them fairly in the face. According to their scheme, first, "I, a sinner out of Christ, am condemned by the law, and under the wrath of God," agreeable to John iii. 18, 36. And this is the very truth; and in the view of this truth, they say, "I am necessarily full of hatred and heart-risings against God." So that, secondly, it is "utterly impossible" that I should ever love God until I first of all know that "God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me." And yet they say, thirdly, that "I, a sinner out of Christ, have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me; nay, so far from it, that in fact I am condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on me." However, they affirm, fourthly, that "I, a sinner out of Christ, just as I am, am firmly to believe, that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me." And, fifthly, "God stands bound by his promise, that I shall never be disappointed." This is their scheme fairly stated: against which, among other things, I object, first, that their faith is presumption; a believing without evidence. There being no evidence that "God is reconciled to me, a sinner out of Christ." Second, their faith is downright delusion, believing a lie, namely, that "God is reconciled to me, a sinner out of Christ, loves me, and will save me;" while in truth every sinner out of Christ is condemned now, and will, dying as he is, be damned hereafter. Third, God has nowhere in the Bible given the least hint, that if "sinners out of Christ do firmly believe, that God is reconciled to them, loves them, and will save them, it shall be unto them according to their faith: they shall never be disappointed." There is not one text of Scripture that looks that way, but multitudes expressly to the contrary. Thus stands the case. Now, men may dodge, and skulk, and hide, and raise a dust, and fling, and cant, and call bad names; but by cool and fair reasoning, they never can get over these difficulties. And it is plain they feel

it is urged upon us, we are prayed and beseeched to be thus reconciled to God; and by every motive from duty and interest, from God and Christ, from heaven and hell, we are pressed, we are compelled, we are in a manner forced, to come in. Having not only verbal declarations, that whosoever will may come; but the highest possible evidences from facts, that God can, consistently with his honor, and is willing to, receive those who do come. The gift, the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of his Son, is more than words, than promises, than oaths, to demonstrate that God is sincere and in earnest; so that there is on God's side no bar, no difficulty in the way; all things are ready, and we may come to the feast and welcome. In the universe there is nothing of the nature of a hinderance or impediment, which can prevent our coming, are we ourselves but inclined to come. But, —

III. If, through mere disinclination to the Deity, to the God that all heaven loves, the God of glory, we make light of the feast, and go our ways, turn our backs upon God, refuse to return and be reconciled, even after a way has been opened for it by the blood of his own Son, and after such methods have been used to persuade us, it will be the most aggravated kind of wickedness in the universe, and a degree of folly and madness not to be paralleled in any other part of God's empire; and to persist in our disaffection to the divine character from year to year, and to refuse to be reconciled to our dying hour, must render us worthy of such a punishment, and prepare us for such self-condemnation, inward remorse, and anguish of heart, as no tongue can express. Then will be accomplished on impenitent sinners the words which are written in Prov. i. 24, 31: "Because I have called, and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh," etc. And all holy beings in the universe, convinced of the justice and wisdom of the divine conduct, will join to cry, Amen, hallelujah; while the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever.

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they cannot. Let any one read my Letters and Dialogues, and Mr. Cudworth's answer, and judge for himself. According to their scheme, I must believe that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me; because otherwise it is utterly impossible to love him. And I must believe this while in the height of my enmity, because it is this belief which begets my first love. This belief then takes place in the heart, while dead in sin, and full of enmity to God. It is the act of an unregenerate, carnal heart; and it makes a carnal heart feel well; and no wonder it does. And these good feelings are supposed to be the Christian graces, when in fact they are the good feelings of a carnal heart comforted by the belief of a lie.

IV. How great is the absurdity of men's believing they have by the gospel a title to heaven, when they reject the very heaven offered in the gospel with abhorrence! The heaven offered is the everlasting enjoyment of God through Jesus Christ. Every one at enmity against God's real character, as exhibited in the law, and declared to be absolutely perfect on the cross of Christ, rejects this heaven with abhorrence! This feast is no feast to him. He is so far from a relish to those heavenly dainties, that his soul loathes this food. To say, that men may come to God by Christ, and find rest and satisfaction in him, while at the same time they are enemies to his real character, is as absurd, as to say, men may come to a feast and eat with pleasure, when they perfectly disrelish every thing set before them. It is true, one who is an enemy to the divine character, may be ravished in a belief his sins are pardoned! and this he may call a feast. And this belief he may call eating: and with this eating he may be satisfied, so as to live contentedly without God in the world. Yea, his contentment and comfort supposes him to be ignorant of the real character of the true God. But it is absurd to suppose one should choose the true God for his supreme good through Jesus Christ, while at enmity against his real character; for men will not choose that for the object of their delight, which in their hearts they do not like. Nor will men desire a Mediator to bring them to the enjoyment of that which they have no appetite for, and which they do not desire to enjoy. While men are enemies to the divine character, they have no inclination to come to him through Christ; rather their aversion to come is equal to their enmity to his character. Yea, that God should actually become the supreme good and satisfying portion of a sinner, who is of such a taste as that God's real character can give him no delight or satisfaction, but the contrary, is a plain contradiction. We must love an object, or we cannot enjoy it. We must be suited, pleased, enamored with the divine character, or we cannot enjoy the Deity. On this account, therefore, it is absolutely necessary we become new creatures. For "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." A sinner could not enjoy heaven, were he admitted and allowed to live there forever. Besides—

Although God can, consistently with his honor, pardon and receive to favor the sinner who returns to him through Jesus Christ, and stands ready to do it, yet it is equally true, that he cannot, consistently with his honor, pardon, and receive to favor, a sinner who refuses to return, while going on obstinate in his rebellion; nor is he at all willing to do it. Christ did

not die that impenitent sinners, while such, might be forgiven and received into the divine favor. God can no more pardon an impenitent sinner, consistently with his honor, than if Christ had never died. The decree of Heaven is fixed, and cannot, and never will be revoked — "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." But as this point is of great importance, and is generally denied by Antinomians, so it shall be taken into more particular consideration.

SECTION VIII.

REPENTANCE IS BEFORE FORGIVENESS.

If God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and of universal obedience; and if our disaffection to the divine character and rebellion against God, is altogether inexcusable and infinitely criminal, agreeable to the voice of the divine law, and to the import of the cross of Christ; if God, the great Governor of the universe, views things in this light, and in this view calls unto us from heaven to confess our sins, repent, and turn unto him with all our hearts; if these things are so, — and they are so if the Bible is the word of God, — then the meaning of his words is certain, the ideas designed to be conveyed by them are determinate. To repent, beyond dispute, is to change our minds as to the divine character, to lay aside our prejudices, to open our eyes, and begin to look upon God as he is, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being; infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and of universal obedience, and in the light of his glory to begin to view our disaffection and rebellion as altogether inexcusable and infinitely criminal, and in this view, cordially to take all that blame to ourselves which God lays upon us, and to be affected accordingly; saying, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest. Should justice take place, no iniquity could be imputed unto thee. It would not be a blemish, but a beauty in thy character, and all heaven ought forever to love and adore thy glorious majesty, should I receive my just desert, and perish forever. But thou canst have mercy on whom thou wilt, through Jesus Christ. To thine infinite grace and self-moving goodness, through him I look. God be merciful to me a sinner." Repentance stands then in oppo-

sition to all our former prejudices against the divine character; and in opposition to that sin-extenuating, self-justifying, law-hating, God-blaming disposition, which reigns in every impenitent soul. God is seen in his beauty; the divine law, as a ministration of condemnation and death, appears glorious; our disaffection and rebellion infinitely criminal. We justify God, approve his law, condemn ourselves, accept the punishment of our iniquity, as worthy of God; and thus we confess, repent, and turn unto the Lord, looking only to free grace through Jesus Christ for pardon.

A man may think himself to blame for Sabbath-breaking, lying, cheating, drunkenness, etc., who never thought himself to blame for being disaffected to the divine character. Also, a man may think himself to blame for not believing that Christ died for him in particular, that God loves him, that his sins are pardoned, or for his being unaffected in this belief, who never thought himself to blame for not loving God as an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being. Some may be sorry wherein they think themselves to blame through fear of punishment, as was the case with Judas; others, who believe their sins are pardoned, may, from a principle of natural gratitude, be sorry wherein they think themselves to blame, as was the case with Saul, when David spared his life. (1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 19.) Saul lifted up his voice and wept, etc. (Chap. xxvi. 21.) Then said Saul, I have sinned, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. But he who is ignorant of the beauty of God's true character, is blind to the chief thing wherein his blame lies. And while men do not see their blame, they will see no occasion to repent; and should any charge sin home upon them in such a case, they would justify themselves in their hearts.

The divine law, which requires us to love God, the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious, and amiable being, with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will on pain of eternal damnation, is holy, just, and good: our blindness to his beauty is wholly criminal; our sin-extenuating, self-justifying pleas are of no weight; all our objections against the divine character and law are only the language of enmity against the glorious Monarch of the universe; we are entirely without excuse, and infinitely to blame. These all are facts. And thus God viewed our case when he gave his Son to die; and thus he views our case when he calls us to confess our sins, repent, and turn unto the Lord; and in this light, therefore, must we view our case, if ever we become truly penitent. Every sin-extenuating, self-justifying plea, every objection

against the divine character and law, is a declaration that we are so far from repentance, that as yet we do not think that it belongs to us to repent, in the sense we are called to in the gospel; in this case we do not confess, but cover our sins.

In true repentance our eyes begin to be opened to see things as in fact they are; God's character infinitely amiable, and our own infinitely odious; his law wholly right; and our ways as wrong and criminal as that supposes. And in this view we begin to take all the blame to ourselves.* True repentance is therefore in consequence of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, and of a nature specifically different from any kind of sorrow for sin a man can experience who is at enmity against God.

Sin is the thing to be repented of; and sin is a transgression of the law. And the first and chief thing required in the law, is supreme love to God. And therefore want of supreme love to God, our disaffection to his character, and rebellion against him, is our great wickedness, which we have to repent of. But it will not be in our hearts to repent, unless we truly see our blame. We cannot truly see our blame, unless we see that which chiefly renders us to blame. But that which chiefly renders God worthy of love, is what chiefly renders us to blame for not loving God. And so it is the

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* *Question.* "How can a finite mind see an infinite object?"

Answer. Not by a full comprehension of it; only by a high sense and lively conviction that it is infinite. As thus: suppose we could see with our eyes a man, for the sake of one sinful pleasure, deliberately leap headlong down into a lake of fire and brimstone, which he and we knew would never be quenched, and out of which there could be no escape, and in which, by God's almighty power, he would be forever held up in existence, his sense of feeling quick and lively; we should pronounce the man guilty of infinite folly. We might see and know that his folly was in fact infinite, although we could by no means fully comprehend the thing. So in this sense we are capable of seeing and knowing that God is infinitely lovely, and we infinitely odious and ill-deserving, how far soever we be from a full, adequate idea of infinity. We are capable of as great a sense of our infinite obligations to love God, as we be of the infinite dreadfulness of eternal misery. In legal conviction, a sinner begins to have some lively sense of the infinite dreadfulness of eternal damnation; so in regeneration and repentance, we begin to have some lively apprehension of God's infinite amiableness, and our infinite odiousness. Some say, "We should leave all infinites out of our scheme of religion." And so we might, if we were in no connection with infinites. To be consistent, these men should deny the infinite glory of God the Father, the infinite evil of sin, the eternity of hell torments, the divinity of Christ; and then, when thus our connection with infinites is at an end, the word, and all notion of the thing, may be excluded out of religion; but not till then. As soon as these men will prove, that God is not an infinitely amiable being, and that we are to die like the beasts, I will say nothing more about infinites. Till then I shall say that the sinner, who, by rebelling against God, runs headlong into eternal destruction, is guilty of infinite folly as to his own soul, as well as of infinite wickedness towards his Maker, the infinitely glorious Governor of the universe.

amiableness of the divine nature which chiefly renders us to blame for not loving God. It is the amiableness of the divine nature, which chiefly renders God worthy of love. It is a sense of this, therefore, that discovers to us the great evil of sin, and shows us the reason we have to be sorry and repent; and which therefore primarily lays the foundation of true repentance, and without which no repentance is true. If I blame my neighbor for being groundlessly disaffected to my character, I shall not, I cannot, look upon him as a true penitent, till, beginning to look upon my character as I think he ought to, he begins to blame himself as I do. It is contrary to common sense to suppose any other kind of repentance to be true and genuine. And if any man abuses me, in name or estate, through disaffection to my person, no penitence for those abuses can be esteemed genuine, so long as the disaffection from which they arose remains in full strength. I appeal to the universal sense of mankind, who, when it comes to their own case, are every one of this opinion. On this ground it was that David put no confidence in Saul, notwithstanding all the tears and penitence which his generosity extorted from him. He did not suppose that that kind of repentance was any certain sign that he was a new man; yea, he had rather venture himself with Achish, king of Gath, a Philistine, a pagan, than with him. (1 Sam. xxvi. and xxvii.)

As want of love to God, together with disaffection to the divine character, has influence into that whole course of wickedness which mankind in general live in; so when they are in Scripture called upon to repent of particular sins and turn to God, their want of love to God, and disaffection to the divine character, as manifested in those particular sins, is to be repented of; and a hearty reconciliation to the divine character is implied in the repentance they are called unto. Thus the frequent idolatries of the children of Israel, for which they are often called upon in the Old Testament to repent, were manifest instances of want of love to the God of Abraham, and proofs of their disaffection to his character. So the Jews, hating and murdering the Son of God, the express image of his Father's person, for which they were on the day of Pentecost called upon to repent, was a manifest instance of their want of love to God, and proof of their disaffection to his character. And there is no sin whatsoever that any man is guilty of, but what is an instance of disrespect to God, and disregard of his authority. Therefore it was said in the case of David's sin, that he despised the Lord, and

despised the commandment of the Lord. And therefore, whenever any one is called upon to repent of any particular sin and turn to the Lord, it is to be understood in this view. He hath sinned against God, despised the Lord, and despised the commandment of the Lord, treated the God of glory, the great King of the universe, with contempt. This is his crime; on this account he is chiefly and above all to blame. And that which renders him infinitely blameworthy, is, that God, whom he despised, is by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and universal obedience. And so in this point of light is the true penitent to view his transgressions, and take blame to himself. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." Wherefore a sense of God's loveliness is the first and chief spring, and source of true repentance, as this brings into view the great evil of sin, even as the truth of the gospel is the only foundation of hope in the true penitent's case. And thus the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ lays the foundation of all religion. (John xvii. 3.)

And let it be remembered, that the same gospel which we believe, was for substance revealed to Adam, and believed by all true penitents from the beginning of the world. These things being premised I proceed to prove, that repentance is before forgiveness. And whosoever will be at the pains to look the Bible through, will find, that this is a doctrine taught by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and his apostles; nor is there any one point of revealed religion more plainly held forth. Let us begin with Moses.

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good? for the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments alway. That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God." This is a specimen of their rule of duty. (Deut. x. 12, 13, 17; xi. 1; xxviii. 58.)

"And it shall be, on the day when you shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster; and thou shalt write upon them all the words of his

law," very plainly. Half the tribes standing on Mount Gerizim, and half the tribes on Mount Ebal, the Levites shall speak and say unto all the men of Israel, with a loud voice, "Cursed, cursed, cursed, twelve times going, all summed up in, 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them;' and all the people shall say, Amen." Which curse, according to St. Paul, comprised eternal damnation in it, even that eternal misery which Christ redeems his people from by his death. So that, besides being cursed in his basket and his store, in the house and in the field, and in all his earthly enjoyments, he, dying under the curse of the law and wrath of God, must be forever miserable in a future state. So infinitely great was the evil of not loving and obeying the Lord their God. (Deut. xxvii. Gal. iii. 10, 14.)

In what way now was an Israelite to obtain pardon at the hands of a great God? The case is plain. According to the Levitical law, once every year, on the great day of atonement, the High Priest, in behalf of all the congregation, was to take a goat for a sin-offering, kill it, and bring the blood within the vail, and sprinkle it upon and before the mercy-seat; for without shedding of blood there was no remission; for the law was holy, just, and good. And in token of repentance, as what must precede forgiveness, he was to lay both his hands on the head of a live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, and thus put them upon the head of the goat to be sent away into the wilderness. And all these iniquities thus by confession put upon the goat, he bore away into a land not inhabited. And it afterwards became a proverb among the Israelites, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Lev. xvi. 15, 22.) For as this was done on the great day of atonement for all the congregation — which day, by the way, was to be wholly, from evening to evening, spent in fasting and deep repentance — and whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, so far from being pardoned, he shall be cut off from among his people, (Lev. xxiii. 29,) — I say, as this was done on the great day of atonement relative to the iniquities of the congregation in general, so, if any particular man at any time committed a sin, he was to bring his bullock, and in token of confession and repentance, to lay his hands upon his head, and substitute it to die in his room; the plain import of all which was, "I have sinned; the law is holy, just, and good: I deserve to die, and have no hope, but from the mere mercy of God through the atone-

ment." And now the bullock was slain, the blood sprinkled, the body burnt; sacrificed in the sinner's stead, and so atonement was made, and his sin forgiven. (Lev. iv.) But if he had not only sinned against the great God, walking contrary to him, but also in his sin injured his neighbor, he must first, as became a true penitent, make restitution to his neighbor, before the sacrifice of atonement was to be offered. (Lev. vi. 5. Matt. v. 23, 24.) And if, without repentance and restitution, like a hypocrite he came before the Lord with his sacrifice, he would be so far from obtaining forgiveness, that it was a proverb in Israel, "The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." And relative to all instances of offering sacrifices, still going on impenitent in their sins, God plainly declared his utmost abhorrence. (Isai. i. 10, 20.)

And if a man is truly penitent, he has not only a heart, with the utmost freedom, to make restitution to those he has injured in name or estate, but also has a heart, with equal freedom, to forgive and love those who have injured him, although, instead of penitence and restitution, they even continue to hate, to curse, and to use him despitefully; therefore our blessed Savior plainly teaches, that unless we love such our enemies, we cannot be the children of God, (Matt. v. 43, 46;) and expressly declares, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses;" which cuts off all impenitent sinners from pardon. For it is plain our Savior means such a kind of forgiving those that trespass against us, as is peculiar to true penitents; for he says, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you." And accordingly he taught his disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," with an apparent design to exclude all unhumbled, impenitent sinners, who have no heart truly to forgive others, from any hope of forgiveness, while in their present state. See this further confirmed from Matt. xviii. 21, 35. · Mark xi. 26. No persons in the world are more bitter, spiteful, unforgiving, than some who firmly believe their sins, past, present, and to come, are all forgiven. If they love their own party, who love them, yet they are of a very unkind, unfriendly, bitter spirit towards their opponents. Repentance humbles the heart, and makes men of a forgiving, benevolent, tender, friendly disposition; but when an impenitent sinner, through the delusion of Satan, becomes confident that he is a favorite of Heaven, it naturally increases his pride; and from pride proceeds a contentious, bitter spirit. But to return to the law of Moses.

God, by the mouth of Moses, told all the congregation of

Israel (Lev. xxvi.) that vengeance should pursue them so long as they continued impenitent in their sins. "If ye will not hearken unto me," etc., "I will appoint over you terror," etc.; "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins;" "And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins;" "And if ye will not be reformed," etc., "I will punish you yet seven times more for your sins;" "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you also, in fury;" "Ye shall perish among the heathens." But if, after all this, they should become truly penitent, then God would forgive them. "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that they have walked contrary unto me, and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land." (Ver. 40—42.)

See, to the same purpose, Deut. xxx. 1, 2, 3, "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, etc., with all thy heart and with all thy soul, that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion on thee," etc., compared with Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 33, where God declares concerning the Jews in Babylon, that he will first bring them to repentance, and then restore them to their land. "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the city," etc. And in this view, read Daniel's confession and prayer in the behalf of the captive Jews. (Dan. ix. 1, 19.)

And as this was the true spirit of the Mosaic dispensation, that repentance is before forgiveness, so Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, which was planned on that dispensation, and may serve to show the true nature of it, expressly and repeatedly holds forth this doctrine, that repentance is before forgiveness. One cannot well see in how strong a point of light this is set, without reading the whole prayer. (1 Kings viii.) The temple was a type of the Son of God incarnate. God dwelt in it, as afterwards he did in the man

Christ Jesus. "My name shall be there." And so, in all their prayers, the penitent Jews looked towards the holy temple; and then God heard in heaven, his dwelling-place. "When thy people Israel shall be smitten down before the enemy, because they sinned against thee, and shall turn again unto thee, and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication unto thee in this house, then hear thou in heaven, and forgive," etc. "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they sinned against thee, if they pray towards this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, ... then hear thou in heaven, and forgive," etc. "If there be in the land famine, pestilence, ... whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house; then hear thou in heaven and forgive, and do and give to every man according to his ways, [that is, according as he appears to be penitent or not,] whose heart thou knowest." "If they sin against thee, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; yet if they bethink themselves, in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee, in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee towards their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou in heaven, and forgive."*

Yea, Solomon lays it down as a universal maxim, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." And not even David, the

* Some, to evade the force of these plain texts, have pretended, "that the repentance insisted upon in Lev. xxvi. and 1 Kings viii. was merely an ungracious repentance, which could entitle only to the removal of outward judgments, but not to the favor of God and eternal life." But they might as well say, that a gracious repentance was nowhere required, nor pardon and eternal life promised, from the beginning of Genesis to the 8th chap. of 1 Kings, and so exclude all who lived before that period from any hope of eternal salvation; for they may be challenged to find any texts more express than these. The truth is, that in the Jewish dispensation, which was altogether shadowy, the earthly Canaan was an emblem of the heavenly; the temporal curses, of the eternal curses; and their sacrifices of atonement, of the great sacrifice of Christ; and their temple, of the Son of God incarnate; and the penitent believer was not only exempted from outward and temporal, but from spiritual and eternal evils. It is certain St. Paul viewed the Jewish dispensation in this light, from Gal. iii. 10, 29, and from the Epistle to the Hebrews throughout.

man after God's own heart, could be exempted, when he sinned; he must confess and repent, before he could be forgiven, and be followed with terror and anguish until he did. Ps. xxxii. 3—5: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

And Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, who cries to every one that is athirst, to come without money, in the same place does as plainly teach that repentance is before forgiveness. Isai. lv. 7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

And Jeremiah preaches the same doctrine. Jer. ii. 5: "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" Ver. 11: "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people hath changed their glory for that which doth not profit." Ver. 19: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts." Chap. iii. 12: "Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you." Chap. iv. 1: "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me." Ver. 3, 4: "Thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, lest my fury come forth like fire."

And Ezekiel, inspired by the same spirit, speaks the same language. Ezek. xviii. 30—32: "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Chap. xxxiii. 11: "That the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" All exactly agreeable to the language

of Solomon's prayer, before cited. (1 Kings viii. 46, 50.*) To the same purpose see also Hos. xiv. 1—3. Joel ii. 12, 18. But to pass on to the New Testament: —

John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way for the holy, heavenly kingdom of the Messiah, into which no man could enter unless born of water and of the Spirit, (John iii. 5,) preached in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As if he had said, "Such is the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, so holy, so like to that kingdom which is in heaven, that no impenitent sinner, while such, can be a member of it, or share in its blessings. Therefore repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: the Messiah will soon make his appearance; repent, and be prepared to receive him." Thus he preached, and many of the children of Israel did he turn to the Lord their God, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord Jesus. (Luke i. 16, 17.) For when the Messiah made his appearance, although many were filled with a temporary joy, yet not one received him as the Messiah, but those who were born of God. (John i. 11—13. 1 John v. 1.) This doctrine of repentance John preached to all the people, to the Pharisees, to the Sadducees, to the publicans, soldiers, etc.; and whosoever came, confessing their sins, he admitted to baptism, as an external sign of the remission of sins. First they must repent, and then be baptized for the remission of sins. And thus John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; placing repentance before forgiveness, just as Moses and the prophets had done before him. (Matt. iii. 1, 12. Mark i. 5. Luke iii. 3, 14.) And Jesus Christ taught the same doctrine. Repent ye and believe the gospel. (Mark i. 15.) I came to call sinners to repentance. (Luke v. 32.) There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke xv. 7.) I came to heal the broken hearted. (Luke iv. 18, 21.) Blessed are they that mourn, for

* To affirm as two late writers, Mr. Sandeman, and after him Mr. Cudworth, do, that every true penitent may be forgiven absolutely without any atonement at all, is implicitly to affirm that the Old and New Testaments are not from God; the chief design of both which being to teach, that without shedding of blood there can be no remission. And to bring the 18th and 33d of Ezekiel to prove the point, is to suppose, that Ezekiel was not inspired by the same spirit which inspired the other sacred writers. Mere law promises life to nothing short of sinless perfection, and curses the man that fails in the least point. (Deut. xxvii. 26.) And there is no deliverance for true penitents from this curse, according to the gospel, but by the blood of Christ. (Gal. iii. 10, 14.) And, therefore, the captive Jews, when brought to repentance, were directed to look and pray towards the holy temple, and in this way hope for pardon. (1 Kings viii.) And to suppose that Ezekiel, in Babylon, taught them to expect pardon in a way contrary to the dispensation they were under, is to suppose him a false prophet.

they shall be comforted. (Matt. v. 4.) But except ye repent, ye shall all perish. (Luke xiii. 3, 5.) And this doctrine he exemplified at large in the parable of the prodigal son, who comes to himself, repents, and returns to his father, and so obtains forgiveness. (Luke xv. 17, 20.) Yea, now he is exalted in heaven to be a Prince and a Savior, he communicates these blessings in the same order; he gives "repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins;" and he observed the same order in his commission to his apostles, to preach in his name repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke xxiv. 48.) And accordingly the apostles began on the day of Pentecost, being all filled with the Holy Ghost, to preach at Jerusalem, in the same order. (Acts ii. 38.) "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." * And as they began, so they went on. (Acts iii. 19.) "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

And when Paul was converted to Christianity, and sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, it was to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins. (Acts xxvi. 18.) And accordingly he went forth and preached every where, that they "should repent and turn to God," testifying, both to Jews and Greeks, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And as to those who shut their eyes, stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts, and were given up to destruction, in the days of Isaiah, of Christ, and of his apostles, their sentence runs thus, — in which is clearly taught, that according to God's established method of dispensing pardon, repentance is before forgiveness, — "Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Acts xxviii. 27.) For what is meant by their being healed is declared in Mark iv. 12 — "and their sins should be forgiven them."

So that this doctrine has been taught by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and his apostles; and if one should attempt

* As to Acts ii. 38, some object, "that the three thousand had a saving faith, and were justified by that conviction, that Jesus was the Messiah, which pricked them to the heart with a sense of their guilt, as being his murderers, before they did repent." But if so, they had a right to baptism before they repented. For a saving faith gives a right to baptism. (Acts viii. 37.) But it is plain Peter calls upon them to repent first, before baptism; nor did he baptize any but those who appeared to receive his word gladly. That kind of faith, therefore, which was before, and without repentance, as in Peter's judgment it did not entitle to baptism, so neither to pardon and salvation; for it was an acknowledged point in the apostolic age, that that faith which entitles to salvation entitles to baptism.

to make a collection, there is doubtless as great a number of Scripture texts, which represent repentance as necessary to pardon, as there is that represent faith as necessary thereto. And we may with as good a face, and with as much consistence with Scripture language, affirm, that we are forgiven before faith, as that we are forgiven before repentance. And it is plain that the repentance spoken of through the Scriptures, as being before forgiveness, is not an ungracious, unsaving repentance; but a gracious, saving repentance; because pardon is constantly connected with it. To these proofs from Scripture texts may be added these scriptural arguments: —*

Argument I. To believe the gospel to be true with all the heart, is before forgiveness; but repentance is implied in believing the gospel to be true with all the heart; therefore repentance is before forgiveness.

That repentance is implied in believing the gospel to be true with all the heart, is evident; for the import of the cross of Christ is, that God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of supreme love, and honor, and universal obedience; that the divine law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honorable; that our disaffection to the divine character, and rebellion against God, is infinitely criminal; as hath been already proved. (Sect. IV.) But with all our hearts to come into these sentiments, and cordially believe them to be true, is to begin to repent, in the Scripture sense of the word; as hath been also already proved, in the beginning of this section, and in Sect. III. Indeed, to believe these truths by the dint of external evidence, against the grain of the heart, as the devil does, doth not imply repentance; nor will such a faith entitle to pardon; but to believe them with all the heart, and cordially to come into these sentiments, is what St. Paul means by repentance toward God. (Acts xx. 21.) And hence we may see the true meaning of our Savior's words, "Repent and believe the gospel;" for we cannot believe the gospel to be true with all the heart, without repentance. And hence that phrase of the apostle, (2 Tim. ii. 25,) "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Heresy is altogether of a criminal nature, a work of the flesh,

* All, except the grossest sort of Antinomians, acknowledge that faith is before forgiveness; as the Scriptures so expressly declare, that he that believeth not is condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on him. (John iii. 18, 36.) If, therefore, it can be proved that repentance is essential to faith, it will follow that repentance is before forgiveness.

and reckoned up along with idolatry and murder. (Gal. v. 19—21.) Impenitent sinners cordially love error, but they hate the truths of the gospel; nor can they be brought to believe them with all the heart, unless God give them repentance. And therefore repentance is implied in faith, and so is before forgiveness.

Argument II. To look to the free grace of God, in the name of Christ, for pardon, is essential to that faith in Christ's blood which is before forgiveness; but repentance is implied in thus looking to God for pardon in the name of Christ; therefore repentance is before forgiveness.

All after acts of faith, with respect to the pardon of sins committed after conversion, are of the same nature with the first act of faith; as is evident from Paul's bringing the example of David to explain and prove his point, whose sin and repentance were long after his conversion. (Compare Rom. iv. 6—8 with Ps. xxxii.) But saints are directed to look to God for the pardon of daily transgressions. (Matt. vi. 12.) "Forgive us our debts." And in John xvi. 23. Christ has taught his disciples to look to God in his name for all things; and so for pardon among the rest. So David prays for pardon, (Ps. li.) and so every penitent Israelite was directed to pray for pardon, looking towards the holy temple, (1 Kings viii.,) which was a type of Christ.

But to look to God for pardon in the name of Christ, implies repentance. Cordially to ask for the pardon which the gospel offers, is cordially to acknowledge we need that pardon; which is cordially to own that we are to blame as the gospel supposes, which is to begin to repent; and to ask in the name of Christ, is to acknowledge that we are not fit to be pardoned; considered in ourselves, are too bad; yea, are so bad, that justice calls for our destruction; nor can God consistently with his honor forgive us but through the blood of his own Son; which supposes that we have a true sense of the great evil of sin, in which repentance radically consists.

We cannot from the heart look to God for pardon in the name of Christ, only as we in our hearts feel that we are to blame, and deserve to be punished according to the true import of law and gospel. But cordially to come into this view of ourselves, so as from the heart to say with the publican, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," is true repentance. It is the character of an impenitent sinner to hide and cover his sins; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. So far as one is cordial in his confession, so far he does actually give up his sins, and begins to forsake them. No impenitent sinner

from the heart will own himself to blame in the sense in which he is charged by God in his law, nor in the sense the gospel supposes, when it calls him to repent and offers pardon. And while one will not cordially own himself to blame as he is charged, nor own he needs the pardon which is offered, he cannot from the heart look to God for it, much less look in the name of Christ. To say otherwise, evidently implies a contradiction. (Compare 1 Kings viii. 46, 50, with Acts xx. 21.)

Thus from express Scripture texts, and from these scriptural arguments, the point stands proved, that repentance is before forgiveness. Some objections have been already obviated: the rest we will now proceed to state and answer.

Objection 1. "We read of some, who are represented as exercising repentance, when their sins are already forgiven." (Ezek. xvi. 63. Luke vii. 48.)

Answer. Very true. And no doubt it is thus with all true converts. Their repentance, instead of ceasing, is always increased by a sense of divine forgiveness. (Compare Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, with Ezek. xvi. 63.) But where do we read of any whose sins are forgiven while they continue impenitent, enemies to God, and obstinate in their rebellion? Nowhere. Rather this is the united voice of all divine revelation. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And therefore, "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Obj. 2. "If Acts iii. 19, will prove repentance and conversion to be before forgiveness, it will equally prove, that none are forgiven till the day of judgment, which is 'the time of refreshing,' there referred to."

Ans. Whatsoever entitles a man to pardon, according to the gospel, in this present time, will entitle him to pardon when Christ shall come to judge the world at the last day; for he will judge the world then according to the gospel. Therefore those who repent and are converted now, exclusive of all impenitent, unconverted sinners, shall be publicly owned by Christ at that time. But if the gospel pardons impenitent sinners now, Christ must accept them then; for he must judge the world according to the gospel. And he who hath a title to heaven according to the gospel must be admitted then. And therefore, if impenitent sinners have a title to heaven according to the gospel, into heaven they will go; for the Judge will, in honor to himself, be obliged to admit all who have a title according to his own gospel. And therefore, if the Antinomian sense of this text is true, Peter had no occasion to say, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come." Rather he ought to have

said, "Believe that your sins are blotted out, impenitent and unconverted as you are, and it shall be unto you according to your faith, when the time of refreshing shall come; for God stands bound by his promise, that you shall not be disappointed."

Obj. 3. "A true penitent is a good man, and may therefore be justified on the foot of his own goodness, and therefore need not believe on Him that justifieth the ungodly." (Rom. iv. 5.)

Ans. No impenitent sinner will cordially own himself ungodly in the sense charged upon him by his Judge: no impenitent sinner, therefore, is willing, or ever did believe on Him that justifieth the ungodly, in the sense the gospel invites us to; as was before proved.* Besides, if arguments will not do, yet facts are stubborn things. And it is a plain fact, that David was a true penitent, and was pardoned after he repented. (Ps. xxxii. 3—5;) and yet David was not a good man in such a sense as that he could be justified on the foot of his own goodness, according to St. Paul; nay, just the reverse; for from this very instance of David, Paul proves that we are not justified by our own goodness, but by believing on Him that justifieth the ungodly. (Rom. iv. 5—8.) And Abraham had been a true penitent above twenty years, as all parties acknowledge, when it was said of him, that "he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness;" which is the other fact by which St. Paul illustrates and proves his doctrine of justification. The objector, therefore, quite misunderstands St. Paul, whose real meaning has been already stated. (Sect. V.) He whose heart is agreeable to the import of this objection, never yet saw the great evil of sin. For in the objection it is virtually denied to be an infinite evil. Socinians and Deists openly deny the

* Antinomian converts, when they believe their sins are forgiven, do not believe that those sins are forgiven which they in fact stand charged with by the divine law; for they do not think themselves guilty of those sins. They justify themselves in that in which the divine law chiefly condemns them. They say, that it is "utterly impossible," yea, "inconsistent with our original constitution, and with the law of God," to yield obedience to the first and great command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." And if I, an unpardoned sinner, do not deserve eternal damnation for not loving God with all my heart, I do not need the pardon the gospel offers; rather the offer of such a pardon is an injury to me. It supposes me to blame when I am not to blame. For if "there is no loveliness conceivable" in the divine nature till God is reconciled to me; and if it is impossible, "utterly impossible," to love him; and even "contrary to the constitution of a reasonable creature, and to the law of God," — I cannot be at all to blame for not loving him; nor do I, in this case, need any pardon at all; nay, the curse of the law, in this case, must needs fill me with hatred and heart-risings in spite of my heart. Nor can I forgive my Maker, and feel well to him, until he delivers me from the curse. So that an Antinomian convert is at the greatest distance from seeing that he needs the pardon which the gospel offers. See Sect. IX.

infinite evil of sin; and on this ground deny the necessity of an infinite atonement. Antinomians are not so consistent; for they profess to believe an infinite atonement, and yet virtually deny sin to be an infinite evil.

Obj. 4. "To say that repentance is before forgiveness, disconcerts my whole scheme of religion, and razeth the very foundation of all my hopes; for it is granted on all hands, that true repentance ariseth from love to God; but to love God before my sins are pardoned, is impossible; for it is my believing that my sins are pardoned, that induces me to love God. When I can believe that Christ died for me in particular, and that my sins are forgiven, then I can love God and repent; but to repent before forgiveness, is new doctrine to me."

Ans. True, it is granted that repentance arises from love to God; and therefore, if repentance is before forgiveness, love to God is before forgiveness too. And that this effectually overthrows the objector's whole scheme, is also true beyond dispute. And as it is plain, that Christ ordered repentance and remission of sins, in this order, to be preached in his name to a sinful, guilty world, and in this order the apostles preached them, so no man has any warrant from the gospel to preach or to believe forgiveness of sins, in any other order. Nay, he who believes his sins are forgiven before repentance, refusing to give credit to the word of God, he believes a lie; and all religious affections begotten by this belief, are founded in falsehood, and are an abomination in the sight of God. And thus it will appear when Christ comes to judge the world according to his own gospel.

Obj. 5. "But are we not justified by faith alone?"

Ans. We are justified by Christ's righteousness alone. If you speak of that which qualifies us for and recommends us to the divine favor, pardon, and eternal life; neither faith nor repentance have, in this sense, any hand in our justification. To say otherwise, is to contradict law and gospel, and in effect to give up the whole of divine revelation; as has been already proved. (Sect. V.)

"True, but are we not interested in the righteousness of Christ, by faith alone?"

2. There is a kind of faith, which is, in its own nature, alone as it first exists, unattended with any one Christian grace; and through the whole period of its existence, it is alone. It begins to exist without repentance and conversion, and it continues to exist without a holy life. This is called (James ii. 26) a *dead faith.* "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." It is "dead, being alone."

Being alone. By being alone, the apostle does not mean that it is unattended by any kind of affections. Even the devil's faith, the apostle observes, is not alone in this sense; he not only believes, but also trembles. And many who have a dead faith, a faith which proves unfruitful, and so apparently and evidently a dead faith, yet, as our Savior observes, "receive the word with joy," and endure for a while. So the Israelites believed the Lord and his servant Moses at the Red Sea, and sang his praise, but soon forgat his works. Their faith was not of such a kind as would answer the end to carry them through the trials before them. When it came to be proved, it was found to be a dead faith. It was in its own nature dead from the first, although it did not appear to be dead till afterwards. Their joys were graceless joys. They had no true love to God in their hearts; that is, no love to God's true character. All their religious affections were merely from self-love, excited by a sense of their great deliverance, and the expectation of soon arriving to a land flowing with milk and honey. So their faith was unattended by any one divine virtue; it was alone, in this respect, at first; and so, of course, it proved to be a faith without works; that is, without any holy works. For their faith was not without works of any kind; nay, they were zealous and very forward in building the tabernacle, every one contributing, of his own free will, enough, and more than enough; but all from selfish principles, expecting ere long to march for the promised land. But no sooner were they disappointed, than at once all their seeming goodness turned into blasphemy; whereas Moses, after he was secluded from the promised land, loved God as well as ever, and was as faithful in his service; for he really loved the God he believed in; he loved his true and real character, and was heartily interested in the honor of his great name. And this love gave him life and spirit, and naturally made him prayerful and active; and thus his faith worked by love. Without this love, his faith had been as dead and inactive as the faith of the carnal Israelites. But his supreme love to God, whom he constantly had in view, as it were seeing him who is invisible, made his faith a living faith; for he loved God so entirely, that it appeared to him, of all things in the universe, the best, to be wholly devoted to his interest and honor, as long as he lived. Yea, to love and enjoy him to perfection forever, was the very recompense of reward he had in view, in the world to come; whereas the carnal Israelites, the more they knew of God's real character, the more they hated it; till they came to wish themselves back again into Egypt; yea, to wish they had died in Egypt, rather than had any thing to do with the God of Israel.

Faith *without works* is dead. Without works — where there is no love, there are no works, in the Scripture sense of the word. "This is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." It is a pleasure to imitate a character which charms our hearts, to honor a person we greatly esteem, and please one we greatly love. The duties of a Christian life are only practical expressions of love to God; they are nothing else than love to God, and reduced to practice. Love to God is the life and soul of every good work. Where there is no love to God, all our works are dead works, in the Scripture sense of the phrase. They are graceless, selfish, hypocritical works. So that faith without works, without a course of holy obedience to all the divine commands, is a faith which is without love to God in the heart. And so it is a faith which is without a sense of the supreme, infinite amiableness of the divine nature; without a sense of which, there can be no true sense of the infinite evil of sin. And so it is a faith without repentance in the first moment of its existence, and a faith without works in the whole period of its existence; and so, in its own nature, a dead faith. And that a man cannot be justified by this kind of faith, is evident, not only from the Epistle of James, but from all the forecited texts of Scripture, which teach that repentance is before forgiveness.

3. Repentance is implied in the very nature of that true and living faith, by which alone a sinner is united to Christ, and interested in his righteousness and atonement, and so entitled to pardon, justification, and eternal life. This has been already proved, and shall be now still further confirmed.

It is said, concerning the apostolic converts, on the day of Pentecost, that they "gladly received the word;" and it is manifest that in doing so, they became true penitents and true believers both at once, in the estimation of the apostles. (Compare ver. 38, 41, 44.)

There are some truths of such a nature, that they may be believed with all the heart, may be received for true, gladly, and be acted upon as such, without repentance. Thus, in a time of great scarcity of bread on an island, the news of a plentiful importation of corn, to be distributed among the inhabitants without money and without price, to whosoever comes, may be received gladly, and believed with all the heart, and the people may flock together to the place of supply, without any thing like repentance. So did the gospel simply bring the news of deliverance from hell, and of eternal joys in heaven, to be the portion of every child of Adam who hears and believes the

news, and takes it to himself. The news might be believed and rejoiced in by every guilty sinner, who is terrified with the thoughts of eternal damnation; nor would any degree of penitency be implied in his faith. For as the famished inhabitants of an island would naturally be ravished with the news of corn, so every guilty, impenitent sinner, frightened with the thoughts of hell, would be ravished with the news of such deliverance. But if the news the gospel brings does not consider us merely as in a state of great calamity, but as criminals; and condemns us wherein we are most apt to justify ourselves, and even declares us to be worthy of the eternal pains of hell for that for which we thought ourselves not at all to blame; we shall receive the news as an abuse, and reject it with abhorrence, till our uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and we disposed to take all that blame to ourselves, which it supposes us justly chargeable with. But the gospel brings us news, "that as the divine law, which requires us in our present state to love God with all our hearts and yield a perfect obedience to his will, on pain of eternal woe, is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be kept in honor, so the Son of God became incarnate, and died upon the cross to do it honor, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner that believes in Jesus." The plain import of which is, "That, notwithstanding all our self-justifying pleas, the God who reigns above, is an infinitely glorious and amiable being, and his law perfect in beauty, without a blemish; and our disaffection and rebellion wholly inexcusable, and infinitely criminal; and we even too bad to be forgiven, unless through the blood of the Son of God." But to believe this with all the heart, and gladly to receive this news for true, is to give up all our sin-extenuating, self-justifying pleas, to acknowledge ourselves infinitely vile and odious, and to loathe and abhor ourselves in the sight of God, and even to look upon it a worthy, and becoming, and godlike deed, in the Most High, to punish eternally in hell such as we. But thus to view God and his law, and the atonement of Christ, and our own character, and with all our hearts to come into these sentiments as the very truth, and even gladly to receive this word, is to be true penitents.

The Jews, through mere disaffection to the divine character and to the divine law, hated Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and doctrines were the very image of his Father, and did honor to his law; and in their hatred, they cried, "Crucify him, crucify him;" and then they led him forth to Mount Calvary, and nailed him to the cross. Their whole conduct was an expression of mortal enmity to the true God and to his Son. When there-

fore Jesus was risen from the dead, and the Spirit poured out on the day of Pentecost, and the guilty Jews, in spite of all their prejudices, by thousands, forced, sore against their wills, to give into it that he was in very deed the Messiah, whom they had murdered, terrified by their horrid crimes, and the fears of eternal wrath, pricked at the heart, as though a sword had been run through their vitals, they cry out in anguish, "What shall we do?" To which Peter gives a very remarkable answer. He does not say, "Do nothing; be passive;" nor does he say, "Believe, O believe your sins are blotted out;" but he says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." As if he had said, "Take all that blame to yourselves which belongs to you. Own the whole truth to God. Let your uncircumcised hearts be humbled. Do not cover, but confess your crimes in his sight, and that in a sense eternal destruction is your due. Look up to the free grace of God through the blood of Christ for pardon; and in token that all your dependence is on his mediation, merits, and atonement, come, be baptized in his name; and your baptism shall be to you an external sign of the remission of sins through his blood." And as many as had their eyes opened by the Spirit of God to view things in this light, gladly received his word, and were baptized; and these, by the apostles, were esteemed true penitents, and true believers, as they thus hearkened to the divine call, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus."

And it is manifest, from the nature of the case, that he who hath his eyes opened to see the glory of the divine nature, the beauty of the divine law, the infinite evil of sin, the need of an infinite atonement; and so to see his need of Christ; and at the same time views God as the supreme, all-sufficient good, ready to receive every sinner that returns to him through Christ, — it is manifest, I say, that every one who is thus taught of God, will repent and return to God as his sovereign Lord and supreme good, and return through Jesus Christ, who is the way to the Father, and the only way in the view of one thus divinely enlightened. For in the clearer light the glory of the divine nature and law is seen, in exact proportion will be the sense of the infinite evil of sin, and the need of Christ's infinite atonement and perfect righteousness; and so repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, will be naturally and inseparably connected; yea, they will be necessarily implied in each other. For he who repents in the view of the glory of God, the glory of the law, and of the atonement, will in his repentance look only to free grace through Jesus Christ for

mercy; and he who looks only to free grace through Jesus Christ for mercy, in a view of the glory of God, law, atonement, will, in doing so, take the whole blame of his disaffection to the divine character, as exhibited in the law, and on the cross of Christ, to himself, judge and condemn himself, and in the very act of faith, repent and be converted. When, therefore, it is said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," the same thing is meant, as when it it is said, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" for the apostolic faith implies repentance in its own nature, and their repentance implies faith in its nature. Sometimes they only mention faith, and sometimes only repentance, and sometimes both together; but the same thing is always intended; for in their views, repentance and faith were mutually implied in each other. Let all the texts of Scripture in the Old and New Testaments, in which we are called to confess our sins, repent, and turn to God, with a promise of forgiveness, or to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that we may be saved, be collected and compared together, and they will all jointly unite to confirm us in these sentiments. The penitent Jew brought a bull or a goat to the altar, and all his hope of pardon was in the shedding of blood; for without shedding of blood there was no remission. Or if he were at a distance from the place of sacrifice and atonement, yet in all his prayers he looked toward God's holy temple. So Jonah did in the whale's belly. (Jonah ii. 4.) So Daniel did in Babylon. (Dan. vi. 10.) And it is evident this was the constant practice of all the pious Jews, from the whole tenor of Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings viii. And for a Jew to look toward the holy temple, where God dwelt in the most holy place, over the mercy seat, which covered the ark in which the law was placed in the most honorable situation, while sacrifices were offered without, and incense within, was the same thing as for a penitent Christian to look to the free grace of God through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, who in his life and death, and now by his intercession in heaven, magnifies the law and makes it honorable. For a Jew to confess his sins, repent, and turn unto the Lord, and pray toward the holy temple, was the same as for one in a Christian country to repent and be converted, and believe in the name of Jesus Christ.

But if any man will still affirm, that we are justified by a faith which is alone, which does not imply repentance and conversion in its nature; it may be boldly asserted, that he contradicts Christ, who sent his apostles to preach, in his name, repentance and remission of sins; and his apostles, who cried, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;"

especially, as Christ doth as expressly declare, that "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" as he does, "he that believeth not shall be damned." *

Thus the point is proved, that repentance is before forgiveness; and thus all objections are answered, and so the way opened for the following remarks: —

I. If repentance is before forgiveness, then no man ever was, or ever will be, forgiven, till first he is brought to true repentance. All those therefore are deluded, who, while yet impenitent, believe their sins to be forgiven; and the stronger their belief is, the greater is their delusion.

II. All those definitions of justifying faith, which leave repentance and conversion out of its nature, are definitions of a faith by which no man ever was or ever will be justified; such, for instance, as make faith a thing, in which the mind is merely passive, such a bare belief of the bare truth, as implies no act, exertion, or exercise of the heart, which effectually excludes repentance and conversion; and such as make faith to consist in a belief, that there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, as such; which is evidently to believe a lie; † and such as make faith to consist merely in a belief that Christ is mine, and that my sins are forgiven before I repent. These, and all such like definitions of justifying faith, are of no manner of use, but to comfort those impenitent sinners against whom the gospel, as well as the law, reveals the wrath of God.

III. All those schemes of religion, the import of which is,

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* This very same doctrine, that repentance is implied in justifying faith, now asserted in opposition to Antinomians, was, near thirty years ago, asserted and defended in opposition to Arminians, by the late learned Mr. Edwards, in his Sermon on Justification by Faith alone — a sermon worthy to be universally read and attended to through the British dominions.

† Mr. Sandeman, speaking of the atonement, says, "All its true friends will readily join in affirming, that Christ came to render impenitent sinners accepted unto everlasting life, by the works which he himself wrought, and thus, by the discovery of preventing goodness, to lead them to repentance." (Letters on Theron, p. 382, edit. 2d.) So then, according to him, neither Moses, nor the prophets, nor Christ, nor the apostles, who all taught that repentance is before forgiveness, were true friends to the atonement; nay, so far from it, that they rendered the atonement, according to Mr. Sandeman, entirely needless; for he affirms, that true penitents may be forgiven without any atonement at all, as was before observed. (Sect. v.) Mr. Sandeman sums up his whole scheme in faith, hope, and charity. His faith is a belief that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement for impenitent sinners, while such; which is a lie. A belief of this lie, is the foundation of his hope that his sins are forgiven. And this false hope, this hope built on falsehood, is the foundation of his love. The whole of his religion "consists in love to that which relieves him;" (Letters to Mr. Pyke;) that is, "in love to the doctrine of forgiveness;" that is, in love to this doctrine, that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement for impenitent sinners, while such; that is, in love to a lie.

that we are not wholly and entirely to blame in not being perfectly conformed to the divine law, and consequently that it does not belong to us to take the whole blame to ourselves and repent, are diametrically opposite to the gospel of Christ; which calls upon us to repent and be converted, as being wholly to blame for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them; yea, infinitely to blame; so that it became the wisdom of God not to forgive us without an infinite atonement. To say, that this law was too severe, and that our blame is not so great as this law supposes, is to declare that it does not belong to us to repent in the sense the gospel calls us to; and to reject the atonement of Christ, which supposes the whole blame to be in us, as an injurious reflection on our character; and even implicitly to declare Jesus Christ to be an impostor. For as Christ lived and died to do honor to the divine law in all its extent, thereby declaring it to be wholly right, and we in fact as much to blame as that supposes, to say we are not, which is the language of every impenitent heart, is to say that Christ was an impostor. So that impenitence and infidelity are in their own nature inseparably connected, on the one hand, even as repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, are on the other.

IV. All those schemes of religion, which in pretence grant the divine law to be holy, just, and good, a glorious law, and that repentance is before forgiveness, but yet implicitly deny it by asserting that it is impossible a sinner should be brought to view the law as such, so as cordially to take all the blame to himself and repent, until he knows that his sins are forgiven, are inconsistent with themselves, as well as with the gospel of Christ, which makes such repentance necessary in order to the forgiveness of sins, and calls upon sinners thus to repent, that their sins may be blotted out, and declares that Christ is exalted to give such repentance to Israel. To repent that we have broken a law we hate, is the repentance of an obstinate rebel; and is in its own nature a lie, like that in Ps. lxvi. 3. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves," (or, as it is in the margin, *lie*) "unto thee."

V. As the whole tenor of the gospel of Christ gives the strongest assurance that no impenitent sinner, remaining such, shall ever be forgiven, so the whole tenor of all false gospels is to persuade impenitent sinners, while such, to believe that their sins are forgiven. Some schemes do this by preaching up a counterfeit repentance, and promising forgiveness to that; meanwhile justifying sinners in their continuing destitute of that

repentance to which the gospel calls them, as the Socinian, Arminian, Neonomian, etc.,* and other schemes expressly teach that we are forgiven before repentance; which is the case with various sorts of Antinomian schemes. But all false schemes, how much soever they differ among themselves, agree in promising eternal life to those who are destitute of true repentance.

VI. If, according to God's established method of dispensing pardon to his criminal, guilty creatures, repentance is before forgiveness, we may hence see the harmony between the impetration and application of redemption; both exactly agree in their nature and tendency to honor God, to magnify his law, to establish his authority, to discountenance and imbitter sin, to humble the sinner, to glorify grace, and to exalt Christ.

The cross of Christ, in the sight of the whole intellectual system, declared, that God was wholly right, and that we were wholly wrong, and as much to blame as the divine law supposed; and so declared, that God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being; and that his law, which requires us to love him with all our hearts on pain of eternal

* Of the counterfeit sorts of repentance which are preached up, these two are the chief: 1st. Some say, that the divine law, which originally required us to love God with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will, is abated; and therefore we are not to blame in not being perfectly conformed to it; and therefore it does not belong to us to repent of this non-conformity. And so the sinner is justified in being without that very repentance to which the gospel calls him. And now to repent wherein they fall short of a conformity to their abated law, is substituted in the room of true repentance. And they, being ignorant of the law of perfection, and the infinite evil of sin, are prepared to make a righteousness of their false repentance; and know no need of Christ only to purchase this abatement of the law, and to make up for their defects of obedience to it, thus abated. 2d. Others, who say the divine law is in full force, unaltered, unabated, yet exempt themselves from blame, by saying, "We have no more power to love God perfectly, than the man with the withered hand had to stretch out his hand;" and when they come to explain themselves, they make the inability of a sinner to be as innocent a kind of a thing as was the man with the withered hand. But who sees not, that the man with a withered hand was not at all to blame; for he could not help his hand being withered, let his heart be ever so well inclined to it. It would perfectly have suited his heart to have had that hand well. It was owing to no fault in him that it remained withered. He might be sorry for it as a calamity, but could not blame himself for it as a crime; and even after Christ had restored it whole as the other, although he might be thankful for it as a benefit done to him, yet he could not blame himself, neither could he repent that his withered hand had not been well sooner. And thus, while this is supposed to be an exact representation of the true nature of our inability, perfectly to conform to the divine law in heart and life, true repentance is forever secluded. No blame belongs to us in this case, nor can we on this scheme take any blame to ourselves, before, at, or after our supposed conversion, for not being perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. And thus the sinner is justified in his impenitency; and in exact proportion as the sinner is justified, God and his law stand condemned. For there is blame somewhere; and if not in us, it must be in him who blames us, even in him who says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

death, is holy, just, and good; and that our disaffection to the divine character, and rebellion against him, is inexcusable, and even infinitely criminal; in consequence of which, the gift of Christ to die in our room, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer, appears to be an act of grace, infinitely great, and absolutely free. And because Christ humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, in this great work, therefore is he exalted to sit even at his Father's right hand, honored with all the honors of heaven; and repentance and remission of sins are granted in his name to apostate, God-hating, guilty rebels; and thus God is honored, Christ exalted, grace glorified, and sin condemned, in the work of our redemption.

In exact harmony with which, the guilty criminal is, by the almighty power of divine grace, brought to view things in this light, and to be affected accordingly. To look upon God as an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being; upon the divine law as holy, just, and good; a glorious law; upon his own disaffection and rebellion, as entirely inexcusable and infinitely criminal; upon the gift of Christ, as an act of grace infinitely great and absolutely free; and in these views, and with an answerable frame of heart, to look only to free grace through Jesus Christ, now at his Father's right hand, for pardon, as of mere free mercy, to a wretch so infinitely odious and ill-deserving, as that it had been an act worthy of God to have cast him into eternal burnings. And thus all is exactly suited to exalt God, to honor the law, to imbitter sin, to glorify grace, and render Christ exceeding precious in the sinner's heart. And so, the same views, spirit, and temper, which were in Christ Jesus to perfection, when he wrought out our redemption on the cross, are in measure communicated to a dead sinner, when he is quickened and raised up to a new and divine life; and so he is made partaker of the divine nature, and becomes a living branch in the true vine, a living member of Christ's body; for of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace. For he and all the members of his body are one, not only one relatively, but one in heart, one in spirit, the same spirit which dwells in Christ being communicated to them. "For ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be the spirit of Christ dwells in you." In regeneration and conversion, these views and affections begin to take place, and from year to year, as with open face, they behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; so they are more and more changed into the same image from glory to glory, till all come to be one with him, as he and his Father are one.

But on the contrary, if, as some plead, pardon is granted to the impenitent sinner, while such, a belief of which is the foundation of his love and of all his religion, then, in the application of redemption, God and his law are dishonored, the import of Christ's death is denied, sin is justified, the sinner's self-justifying spirit is gratified, and the grace of the gospel kept out of view. For this is the native language of such a sinner's heart; "There is no loveliness conceivable in the divine nature, but what results from his love to me; and it is impossible I should love God from any other motive, nor is it my duty, nor is the gospel designed to bring me to it, nor am I to blame that I do not, nor do I need the atonement of Christ in the case, or pardon for not loving God for the loveliness of his own nature; for there is no loveliness in his nature, but as he loves me, and designs to save me." Thus the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious and amiable being, who is by nature God, in himself, let me be saved or damned, infinitely worthy of supreme love, and honor, and universal obedience, according to the united import of the divine law, and of the cross of Christ, is at once stripped of all the original, independent, eternal, immutable glories of his Godhead, the divine law is virtually pronounced tyrannical, the import of Christ's death impiously denied, his atonement pronounced needless, and himself virtually declared to be an impostor, our being dead in sin justified, our disaffection to the divine character declared to be no crime, or reconciliation to be no duty, no pardon no atonement, no sanctifier needed in the case. "No; for we are right; God and his law are wrong: if God will repent and make restitution; if God will deliver us from the curse of the law, and give us heaven, we will forgive him, feel no more heart-risings toward him, but love him if he will thus love us. Otherwise, it is impossible we should love him, impossible but that we should hate him and his law; for there is no loveliness conceivable in his nature, unless he will love and save me." Thus the impenitent, proud, haughty wretch, ungods the Deity, condemns his law, blasphemes the cross of Christ, justifies himself, denies his sin, his need of atonement, of regeneration, of repentance, of pardon, and is filled with love and joy in a firm belief that God Almighty looks upon things as he does. And this impious, blasphemous love and joy he calls by the sacred name of Christian piety.

SECTION IX.

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS, THE CAUSE AND CURE, OF A SELF-RIGHTEOUS SPIRIT.

THE nature and effects, the cause and cure of a self-righteous spirit, might have been collected from the principles laid down and proved in the other sections of this Essay, by the judicious reader; but for the sake of weaker capacities, it may not be amiss, if these things are briefly stated; and the rather, as it is of great importance this subject be well understood.

In general, a self-righteous spirit consists in a disposition to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think; and so, it is pride. And it stands in opposition to humility, which is to think soberly of ourselves, and as we ought to think, as St. Paul defines it. (Rom. xii. 3.) And a self-righteous spirit arises from blindness to the divine glory, and ignorance of our true character and state, as they appear in the sight of God, and as they really are, compared with his holy law. The spiritual knowledge of God and his law, and a view of ourselves in contrast with God and his law thus known, is the cure of a self-righteous spirit. When the divine character, as exhibited in his law, begins to appear in its infinite glory, our character will begin to appear in its infinite odiousness. And this begets a disposition to think soberly of ourselves, and as we ought to think. And so we, through the law, become dead to the law, that we may live to God. But to be more particular, —

I. A self-righteous spirit consists in a disposition to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. How we ought to think of ourselves hath been already stated. (Sect. III.) When a man thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think on the account of his fine clothes, he is called by the odious name of *fop*. But when, in the exercise of the same temper, he thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, upon religious accounts, he is called by the more odious name of a *self-righteous* man. (Luke xviii. 9, 14.) The same spirit of pride, which leads one to be proud in a view of his fine clothes, inclines another to be proud in a view of his large estate, or honorable parentage, or good bodily features, or superior genius, or great acquired mental accomplishments. And it is the same spirit which leads all mankind in general to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think in

religious respects; for a self-righteous spirit is common to mankind in general, although in different men it operates differently; and in some more than in others. It reigns in all unregenerate men: and it is mortified in saints no further than they are sanctified, and will not be entirely eradicated out of their hearts until they become perfectly holy. It operates differently in different men.

In the profane, it operates to keep them secure, to fortify them against the fears of death and hell, and guard them against the terrors of the divine law; that they may take their full swing in sinful pleasures unmolested. For thus it inclines them to think: "I can break off my sins when I please; and whenever I break off, God will be obliged to forgive me." Herein he thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, in two respects. First, he thinks his heart to be much better than it is, even that he can find in his heart to give up all sin and turn to God. But if he would make a thorough trial, he would find it to be a mistake. He would find that sin has full power of his soul; that he loves it so entirely, that it is not in his heart to be inclined to forsake it. To forsake sin, in general, I mean; for he may be inclined to change one lust for another, turn out a black devil and take in a white one, leave profaneness, and become a civil, sober, self-righteous hypocrite. But to turn from all sin in general, and to turn unto the Lord, is not in his heart. "For the carnal mind is enmity against God; is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." And, secondly, he thinks too highly of himself in another respect, namely, that there will be so much virtue in his repentance and reformation, as to atone for all his past wickedness, and entitle him to the favor of God; whereas, according to the divine estimation, there is so much blame and ill-desert in one wilful transgression, as to make an eternal forfeiture of his soul, and plunge him into a hopeless, remediless state, according to a rule of strict justice. So that, if he had no more interest in Adam's sin than in Noah's, yet, after one transgression, he is a lost creature, liable to die and go to hell in a moment; and God absolutely unobliged, if he lives, to grant him any assistance of his Spirit, or ever to regard any of his prayers. For if one transgression exposes a man to the curse of the law, according to Gal. iii. 10, then the transgressor may be justly sent to hell immediately; and therefore God is unobliged to show him any favor of any kind; and it is entirely owing to pride and self-conceit, that sinners are inclined to view things in another light. They think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; and this, which

is natural to profane sinners, has a great influence to keep them secure in sin.

In awakened sinners it operates to incline them, by their reformations, prayers, tears, etc., to go about to establish their own righteousness; for, being so terrified with the thoughts of eternal destruction, that they can no longer go on quietly in their sinful pleasures, they now go about to pacify the Deity by their amendment and fervent prayers. And thus they think: "If I repent and reform, if I humble myself before God, and pray, and do as well as I can, he is obliged to show me mercy; for it would be hard and unjust in God to require more of his poor creatures than they can do, and then damn them for not doing." And perhaps thousands and ten thousands build their hopes for heaven on this foundation, and live and die upon it; not considering, that "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;" not once reflecting, that if their best doings ought in reason to recommend them to the divine favor, there was no occasion for the incarnation and death of the Son of God; and that therefore, if they are right, the whole gospel is overthrown. Their pride absolutely blinds their eyes, that they cannot see; and stops their ears, that they cannot hear; and hardens their hearts, that they cannot understand. Or, if some men, of more penetration, perceive that this way of thinking does in fact overthrow Christianity, they will sooner give up the whole of divine revelation, than give up their pride. And from this source it is, that Great Britain is so filled with infidels. And from this source it is, that infidelity begins to creep into New England, which, if divine grace prevents not, may in half a century make great progress. For as the Pharisees would sooner believe, that Jesus cast out devils by Beelzebub, than that they were serpents and a generation of vipers, worthy of the damnation of hell; even so it is here. But meanwhile, in Antinomian converts, to extricate themselves out of these embarrassments, a self-righteous spirit prompts and emboldens them to take a short and easy method, to think well of God and of themselves both at once, and so their pride and religion become perfectly harmonious; in the belief of these two maxims: first, "God loves me, impenitent as I am;" secondly, "To believe that God thus loves me, and to love him merely in this belief, is the sum of religion." For in the belief of these two articles, the divine law, which stands prepared to slay the self-righteous sinner, is set aside, and turned out of doors; the curse, by the first; the command, by the second; and so the divine law being cashiered by this belief, the self-righteous sinner stands completely self-justified.

He believes, or rather imagines himself into the love of God, and out of the reach of the law, and so into a good opinion of the Deity, and of himself, both at once; or rather through that enmity to God's real character, with which his self-righteous spirit inspired him; emboldened by the same self-righteous spirit, he forms a deity in his own fancy, all made up of love to him, which suits his heart; and being suited with the deity he has made, is pleased with himself more than ever. And so he thinks himself a believer, a saint, a disciple of Christ, and that he shall be rewarded in heaven for all the reproach he brings upon himself; not knowing that enmity to God and his law, and to the cross of Christ, lie at the bottom, and are the sources of all his religion. And thus, and in this way, he is confirmed and self-justified in thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think. And thus we see how a self-righteous spirit operates differently in different persons. These three sorts are mentioned only as a specimen; for instead of three, there may perhaps be three hundred different ways in which this same spirit works.

II. A self-righteous is a sin-extenuating, self-justifying, and in consequence a law-hating, God-condemning disposition; and so stands in direct opposition to repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Just in exact proportion as a man is inclined to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, is he inclined to make sin-extenuating, self-justifying pleas; and every word he says in his own justification, is to the condemnation of God and of his law; for if in fact we are not so bad, nor so much to blame, as the divine law supposes, he who made the law will stand condemned. Take Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," which are the words with which St. Paul militated against a self-righteous spirit in his day, and show what the divine law requires in heart and life, and show what is implied in the curse, and from the eternal punishment threatened infer the infinite evil of sin, and by consequence our infinite obligations to love God with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will; and show that God is absolutely unobliged, according to law, that perfect rule of right, either to assist the sinner, or to pardon his defects; and urge this law home upon a self-righteous heart, as the law of the great God, the law which was honored on the cross of Christ, and which will be put in execution at the day of judgment on every Christless sinner, angels and saints shouting Hallelujah all around the

judge; and as the anvil bounds back the hammer, so will such a heart resist the truth.

And while he extenuates his sin and justifies himself, he will blame the law, and condemn the lawgiver. For says the profane, "To suppose that my delaying repentance one day longer, is so great a crime, as justly to expose me to the eternal pains of hell without hope, cannot be true; nor will I ever believe God is so unjust as to put his frail creatures under such a law." And says the awakened, "I have reformed and humbled myself before God, and prayed, and done what I can. And to believe now, after all, that God is still absolutely unobliged to show me mercy; that he requires perfect love and perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation; is more than I can bear. It cannot be justified. The very thoughts of it breed hatred and heart-risings in spite of my heart." And says the Antinomian convert, "I always found by experience, that it was impossible to love God, before I believed his love to me; and by experience I still find, that it is impossible to love God in any other view. All, therefore, that God really requires is, that we believe his love to us, and in that belief, love him again." And thus all three stand discharged from that duty which the divine law requires, self-justified; God and his law implicitly condemned.

The divine law supposeth that God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being; and on this ground it requires mankind, each and every one, to love him with all their hearts, on pain of eternal death. This it requires even of the Gentiles, who never heard of the grace of the gospel, and consequently of all mankind, antecedent to that consideration. And in the sight of God all were without excuse, every mouth stopped; and in this view of the case, he gave his Son to die upon the cross, to declare this law to be holy, just, and good. But in this view, the divine law is universally hated by every self-righteous heart, and a non-conformity thereto is universally justified, from the most profane to the most devout. "I cannot," cries one. "It is impossible," cries another. "The very thought of such a law breeds hatred and heart-risings, in spite of my heart," cries each and every one.*

* Mr. Cudworth has gone further, and taken a very extraordinary step indeed, to justify the self-righteous sinner, in not loving that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, in honor to which an incarnate God died on the cross. He not only declares, and endeavors to prove, that it is "utterly impossible" to love it; but also that to love it, is in its own nature a wicked thing, "contrary to the law of God." And if "contrary to the law of God," it is contrary to the nature of God. God himself then does not love that character; that is, God the Father does not love himself. No wonder, then, he thinks, that

Now, that belief, which gives comfort to a self-righteous heart, thus at enmity against the divine law, by whatever humble name it is called, does, in fact, feed and confirm a self-righteous spirit; and for that reason, will be tenaciously maintained, although without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason. So one believes, that if he will do as well as he can, God has promised to save him; and this gives him ease. And another believes, that God has promised absolutely to save him without any condition at all; and this gives him comfort more abundantly. And while each remains strong in his belief, by which the divine law is set aside and removed out of sight, each enjoys himself full well. But if light should break in, and the divine law come into view, and their true character and state appear, dead in sin and under the curse, both would return to their "hatred and heart-risings" again, as much as ever. For, the sin-extenuating, self-justifying temper remaining unmortified, God and his law will be, of course, hated and condemned, whenever they come into view. The faith of both is of use only to keep God and his law out of sight and out of mind, and thus it comforts them. Let God and his law come into view, and their faith is destroyed, and their comforts are gone, and their heart-risings come again; and therefore both are to the last degree tenacious of their different schemes. A self-righteous spirit lies at the bottom of

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to love this character is "beyond what Adam did in paradise, beyond the Scripture saints, the apostles, and even Jesus Christ himself." For if it is "contrary to the law of God," and so a wicked thing, it must be contrary to the nature of God, and of every holy being in the universe. And thus the self-righteous sinner stands completely justified, in not loving God's true and real character; yea, has the comfort to think it would be a sin to love it; a thing "contrary to the law of God."

But, "contrary to the law of God," and wicked as it is, no sooner does he see Theron brought through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, in a view of the amiableness of this character, to take all the blame of his disaffection to the Deity himself, and repent and return to God through Jesus Christ, all his hope of acceptance arising simply from mere free grace through the great atonement, but he changes his tone; and for the sake of condemning Theron, expressly contradicts himself. For now, all at once, that very thing which he had been just trying to prove to be "contrary to the law of God," is affirmed to be of so holy and divine a nature, as to have virtue and merit enough in it to atone for all our past sins, and recommend us to the favor of God, and entitle us to eternal life, without any need of Christ or his atonement. Such converts as I make my Theron to be, he affirms, "have no occasion for the sovereign mercy of God in Jesus Christ. They are entitled to life in their own name, on the foundation of their own love, wherever they can be found." And this he sets himself to prove, from the words of the prophet Ezekiel, which has been already answered. So that, according to Mr. Cudworth, that which is in its own nature sinful, "contrary to the law of God," is more meritorious than all the virtue of the heavenly hosts, which would not be sufficient to atone for one sin. Yea, its virtue is as effectual to save, as the blood and righteousness of the Son of God. If Mr. Cudworth can believe all this, what cannot he believe? And can such a man be reasoned with?

all their zeal, as their schemes are adapted to give ease and comfort to self-righteous hearts, and guard and defend them from the terrors of the divine law, prevent the blasphemous workings of their own minds, which beget horror and awaken the fears of future wrath.

III. A sin-extenuating, self-justifying, self-righteous frame of heart, is in direct opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For had our disaffection to the divine character not been as criminal as the curse of the law supposed, there had been no reason the Son of God should have been made a curse in our stead. Had there been any plea to extenuate our fault, or in the least to have justified us in our not loving God with all our hearts, the law had not been strictly right. And God's being so severe against sin, had not been a beauty, but a blemish, in his character; and if there had been a blemish in the divine character, to love him with all our hearts had been strictly and properly impossible. The fault would have been not in us, but in God; and so no need of Christ to die, to declare God to be wholly right. Rather, as on this hypothesis, God was wrong: he ought to have retracted, to have repealed his law, and granted us relief; he ought in justice to have done it, and a mediator was altogether needless in the case. And thus the sinner is justified, and God condemned, and the whole gospel overthrown. And this is the native tendency of a self-righteous spirit. A self-righteous spirit is therefore in direct opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, accordingly, a self-righteous spirit was the source of the hatred and heart-risings of the Pharisees against the character of Jesus Christ. They could not bear to think themselves so bad as his doctrines imported; and therefore they became soon disaffected toward his person. (John iii. 19—21.) And when he plainly told them what they were in the sight of God, and what they deserved at his hands, (Matt. xxiii.,) they immediately conspired to put him to death. The twenty-third chapter of Matthew contains our Savior's last speech to the Pharisees, who, three days after, got him fast nailed to the cross. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" were words the Pharisees never could forgive. The character these words gave the Pharisees was no worse, was but just equal to the import of the divine law, the law God gave to Moses, the very law which the Pharisees pretended to believe and love, but which they really hated. Our Savior, therefore, merited their resentment, by these words, no more than God the Father did by his law. And, indeed, in the height of all their religion and devotion,

they hated God the Father as much as they did Jesus, his well-beloved Son. And their hatred to the true God had led them to frame a false image of God in their own fancy, to suit their own hearts. This false image they loved, and were zealous for his cause; and this love and zeal, infinitely odious to God as it was, they made a righteousness of and gloried in. This proud, self-righteous spirit prepared them to hate and murder the Son of God, the express image of his Father; and in their conduct, as in a glass, the nature and tendency of a self-righteous spirit may be clearly seen.

IV. A sin-extenuating, self-justifying, self-righteous spirit, is cordially beloved, approved of, and justified; and so reigns in the heart of every unregenerate man; how great soever the zeal of some may seem to be against it; for he who condemns it in one shape, may heartily like it in another. And every unregenerate man, of whatever profession, — Arminian, Antinomian, or Calvinist, — is at enmity against God and his law; and therefore is disposed to justify himself, and lay the blame upon his Maker. Being better instructed, many may keep their thoughts to themselves, as being rationally convinced they are wrong, how naturally soever they flow from their hearts, and indicate the true temper of their souls; but thousands will boldly speak out their minds, and in their ignorance attempt to justify themselves before their Maker.

"It is impossible," cries one, "that I should love God before I know my sins are pardoned; for there is no loveliness in his nature in any other view." And if there is no loveliness in his nature, but on this account, then the law which, without any respect to this, requires us to love God with all the heart, is wrong; and so the man is not to blame, but stands justified in his non-conformity to this perfect rule of right.

"But the divine law requires sinless perfection," says another, "and that on the penalty of eternal damnation. But this is more than any son of Adam can do." And what consequence would he draw from these words, to which he has no determinate ideas, as such men will admit of no distinction between want of heart and want of power; — what consequence, I say? Why, in his esteem, no son of Adam is to be blamed for not being perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect; and so an apostate world all stand justified at once, in their "not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And therefore the Holy One of Israel must be condemned for denouncing the curse in this case; and the Son of God must be supposed to have died a sacrifice to tyranny; all which is no better than downright blasphemy, pregnant with

infidelity. But a self-righteous heart will maintain its ground, and stand the shock, although to the subversion of all religion, natural and revealed.

Therefore, I say, a self-righteous, self-justifying disposition not only operates, but reigns in every unregenerate heart. It is loved, it is approved, it is justified, it has full possession of the heart; even so full possession as to be proof against all the miracles which support the truth of divine revelation. And therefore let God declare in his law, that any defect of perfect obedience merits eternal woe, and let the goodness of this law be asserted and sealed by the blood of an incarnate God, it is all to no purpose: a self-justifying heart will stand its ground, and vindicate itself, in opposition to all.

Our blessed Savior, the express image of his Father's person, viewed the character of the Pharisees in the same light his Father's law did, and in his heart he verily thought "all heaven ought forever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although they received their just desert, and perished forever." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" And had they viewed themselves in the same light, and had an answerable frame of heart, they had not been disgusted, but rather pleased with his character. "Truth, Lord, we are serpents, we are a generation of vipers, an infinitely odious and hateful race, worthy of the damnation of hell; nor would it be a blemish, but a beauty, in the divine conduct to send us thither." This would have been to have thought soberly of themselves, and as they ought to have thought.* But just the reverse was the temper of their hearts. "You think damnation good enough for us, and we think crucifixion good enough for you. Away with him, away with him! Crucify him, crucify him!" And if these men had no cloak for their sin in our Savior's eyes, seventeen hundred years ago,

* *This would have been to have thought soberly of themselves, and as they ought to have thought.* — No, says Mr. Cudworth, this would have been "the summit" of self-righteousness; that is, if the Pharisees had viewed their own character in that odious point of light in which Christ did, it had been the highest degree of pride. Why then were not the Pharisees pleased with that odious character Christ gave them? Why was not their pride gratified by these words, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Does Mr. Cudworth really believe that God the Father and God the Son viewed the character of the Pharisees in a point of light, in which, if the Pharisees had viewed themselves, it must have cherished and fed a self-righteous spirit? To believe this, is worse than infidelity. And yet this is implied in his charging my Theron with self-righteousness, merely for viewing his character in the very light in which it stood in the eyes of God, and of his Son, in which view he thought in his heart, that all heaven ought forever to "love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although he received his just desert and perished forever;" and so God the Father thought, and so thought Jesus Christ his Son.

we may be assured that all our self-justifying pleas will be esteemed of no weight in his sight, when he comes to judge the world according to his Father's law, in all its rigor; so far, so very far from it, that when he pronounces the final sentence, angels and saints will shout forth their hallelujahs all around him.

There is not a self-justifying sinner on earth, who has a better plea to make in his own behalf than many a Pharisee had. Can you say, "I am strict in external duties"? "I more," might the Pharisee say; "all these things have I kept from my youth up. Yea, as touching the righteousness of the law, I am blameless. For, lo! these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." "Yes, but I practise many difficult and self-denying duties," says the sinner. "I more," says the Pharisee; "I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all that I possess." "But I am hearty and zealous in religion," says the sinner. "I more," says the Pharisee; "for with great expense and fatigue I compass sea and land to make proselytes." "But I believe that God loves me, and that I shall assuredly have eternal life; and in this belief, I love God," says the sinner. "I more," says the Pharisee; "for we know we not only have Abraham to our Father, but God is our Father; and I can thank God I am not as other men, in his very presence, for he knows how good and how upright I am." "Yes, but the Pharisees hated Jesus Christ," says the sinner. "True, but no more than you hate that character of God which is exhibited in that law, to do honor to which, the Son of God laid down his life. They felt toward the character of Jesus Christ, just as every self-righteous sinner feels toward the character of God the Father exhibited in his law." "Yes, but I believe the gospel, and they rejected it." You cordially believe the gospel in no other sort than they believed the writings of Moses, namely, understood in such a manner as to justify them, even as they justified themselves. In every other sense, whatever orthodox profession the self-righteous sinner may make with his mouth, yet in the temper of his heart, he rejects the gospel as much as they did; for no man believes that Jesus is the Christ with all his heart, but he who is born of God. (1 John v. 1.) Indeed, you may give the gospel a new meaning of your own, just as they did the writings of Moses, and this new meaning you may love and believe cordially, even as they believed their pharisaical scheme; but the very truth you hate and oppose in the temper of your heart, even as they hated and opposed Christ in an open and public manner. "But it is impossible this should be my

character, for then I am no better than an enemy to the God of heaven," says the sinner. True, exactly true, — this is your very character in the sight of Heaven; as it is written, (Rom. viii. 7,) "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And just so our blessed Savior, the meek and lowly Jesus, told the Pharisees, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers;" nor had they any reason to take this plain dealing ill at his hands.

V. There is nothing short of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, that can effectually take down the pride of a self-righteous heart, and beget a disposition to justify God, and take blame to ourselves, answerable to the import of the divine law.

Scriptural and rational arguments cannot do it. Rather, as the leviathan, in the book of Job, esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood, so all scriptural and rational arguments are before a self-righteous heart. Miracles are also insufficient. For when the Pharisees could evade the force of them no other way, they would even, in contradiction to common sense, declare, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub." Just as if Satan might be divided against himself. Nay, Scripture, and reason, and miracles, all united together, are not able to take down the pride of a self-righteous heart. St. Paul tried them all, and he did his best; and a little before his death, in an Epistle to his son Timothy, he fairly owns himself beat. (2 Tim. iii. 13.) "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." He could make them see that they were inconsistent with themselves, and even make it appear to others that they were self-condemned; but still they would obstinately maintain their self-righteous principles, although they were excommunicated for it. (Tit. iii. 10, 11.) And these men were our ensamples, and these things were written for our instruction.

For an impenitent sinner to "believe that God loves him, and that his sins are forgiven," instead of taking down, naturally feeds the pride of a self-righteous heart. Witness the Pharisees of old.

To say, "that we are to be perfectly passive, to do nothing, to feel no motion in our hearts, but to be justified without any act, exercise, or exertion in the human mind," does not indeed agree with Scripture language, which calls upon us to repent and be converted, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins may be blotted out, and we be saved; however, it is not so disagreeable to the pride of an indolent, sluggish heart, dead in sin, but that it may pass. For if men can but get a hope

they shall be saved, without being brought down to own that God's character is as glorious, and theirs as odious as the divine law supposes, and so without being necessitated to look to free grace through Jesus Christ, in that precise point of light in which it is exhibited to view in the gospel, the life of Agag is saved; a proud, impenitent, self-justifying, self-righteous spirit, is unsubdued; and the native enmity of the heart against the divine character, keeps its ground; and a carnal heart, under terror, can, in a strait, bear with any scheme, in which these points may be saved. But to exalt God so high, and come down so low, as in the least degree to answer to the import of the divine law, and to the import of the cross of Christ, is so diametrically opposite to the temper of a carnal heart, which is at enmity against God, that nothing short of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit can effect it.

No conviction, from the Spirit of God, the mind of a natural man, remaining such, is capable of, is sufficient to strike death to the root of a proud, self-righteous, self-justifying disposition. Great convictions of sin and guilt a natural man is capable of; yea, it is possible the conscience of a natural man may be so awakened, as that he may know, may be quite certain, that there is not the least jot of goodness in his heart; yea, that he is dead, altogether dead in sin; and so has nothing in the world to make a righteousness of; whereby he may be driven to despair, totally to despair of mercy, from this quarter; yea, and his mouth be so stopped, as that he has not one word to say for himself; yet all this, how much soever it may knock down and stun a self-righteous spirit, does not in the least cure the mind of a self-righteous disposition; and nothing is wanting but materials to work upon, and the disposition will rise again, and live and reign as high as ever. Thus it is in some sinners, who have had great legal convictions: upon their receiving false comfort, and getting false religious affections, they have been more proud after their supposed conversion than ever they were before; and more under the government of a self-righteous, self-justifying spirit — proud when full of comfort; and when their good feelings are all gone, virtually laying all the blame to God, who, they say, is withdrawn from them, and they can do nothing of themselves; not once imagining that they are really criminal, infinitely criminal in the sight of God, for not loving the Lord their God with all their hearts, according to the first and great command of God's holy law. And hence it is always difficult to convince a deluded sinner in proportion as his false comforts and joys have been great, although, in strict truth, there is no more grace in the heart of

the devoutest Pharisee on earth, than in the vilest pirate that ever sailed the seas; for it is true of every unregenerate man, that he is at enmity against God. (Rom. viii. 7.)

By the law is the knowledge of sin; and by the law a natural man may see that he is a sinner in so complete a sense, as that he has nothing to make a righteousness of; and yet the self-righteous disposition may remain wholly unmortified. Thus in this sense, no doubt, Satan now knows that he is a sinner; and in this sense, it is certain, Satan and all wicked beings will know at the day of judgment that they are sinners. However, the pride of Satan's heart is not mortified now, nor will the pride of Satan, or any other wicked being, be slain by the convictions they will receive at the day of judgment.

Nothing can effectually take down the heart, short of that light in which the divine law and our own character is seen, through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit. If before regeneration the commandment come, sin revive, and I die, in a sort; yet all this is sore against the bias of the heart: but it is in regeneration, that "I through the law am" cordially "dead to the law, that I may live to God." For a disposition to justify ourselves in not loving God with all our hearts, will itself actually die and cease to be, and the contrary disposition take place, only in proportion as God appears to our souls worthy of our supreme love. It is this, and nothing short of this, which will incline us, from the heart, of our own accord, to take all the blame of our disaffection to the divine character home to ourselves. And so, while the divine law is viewed in the light of the divine glory, it will appear as it never did before, holy, just, and good, a glorious law; and it will come to pass, as it is written, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live unto God."

The damned will at the day of judgment have such a knowledge of God and of themselves, as will convince their consciences that the law is just. (Rom. ii. 5. Jude 15.) Sore against their wills, they will be forced to own that God ought to have been loved and obeyed; and that they deserve damnation for their disaffection and rebellion. But, being blind to the holy beauty of the divine nature, they will feel no inclination, no free, genuine, cordial disposition to take the blame of their disaffection and rebellion home to themselves. Their proud, self-justifying temper will remain unmortified, while they are conscience-convinced that they are absolutely without excuse. They would be heartily glad to excuse themselves and lay the blame upon God, if they could; their old

disposition that way will be wholly alive: but their mouths will be stopped; and therefore they will blaspheme God, and be self-condemned, both at once — an amazing, dreadful state.

But in regeneration, the sinner is brought to such a view of God, as an absolutely perfect, infinitely glorious and amiable being; and to such a view of the divine law, as holy, just, and good, a glorious law, as even begins to kill a self-righteous, self-justifying disposition in the bottom of the heart. And from the inmost soul the man begins to see, think, and feel, that God is wholly right, and that he himself is wholly wrong; and so from the heart to give up every sin-extenuating, self-justifying plea, and cordially to take the whole blame to himself, and frankly to own the honest truth — "I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." "God be merciful unto me, a sinner."

And now, and not till now, will he begin to see that he needs that kind of pardon which the gospel offers. A pardon which supposes, that our disaffection to the Deity is entirely inexcusable, yea, infinitely criminal; so very criminal, that the blood of an incarnate God was necessary to make atonement for it, that, consistent with the honor of the divine government, it might be forgiven.

And now, and not till now, will he begin to see the atonement of Christ. For till now he will not begin to see his disaffection to the Deity so very criminal, as to render such an atonement needful, in order to his being pardoned, consistent with the divine honor.

And as his sense of God, as an absolutely perfect, infinitely glorious and amiable being, increaseth; and his sense of the divine law as holy, just, and good, a glorious law, honored on the cross by the blood of an incarnate God; and his sense of the inexcusableness and infinite evil of not loving God with all his heart; as a sense of these increases, his proud, self-righteous, self-justifying disposition, will die; and his need of Christ and free grace appear in a clearer and clearer light. No man so sensible of his need of Christ and free grace as the apostle Paul, who beyond doubt was the holiest of all mere men that ever lived — "I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live to God. I am crucified with Christ."

SECTION X.

THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS; AND HOW THE GOD OF THIS WORLD BLINDS THE MINDS OF THEM THAT BELIEVE NOT.

When it is said, that Satan provoked or stirred up David to number Israel, (1 Chron. xxi. 1,) it is not to be imagined, that the corruptions of his own heart did not move him to that deed. This was no doubt the true state of the case, (ver. 17,) and Satan only took advantage of those corruptions to set him on. So, when it is said that the God of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them, no doubt the corruptions of the human heart lie at the bottom of all that criminal blindness, which Satan endeavors to increase and strengthen by all ways in his power.

The question therefore comes to this — What is there in the human heart, which renders men blind to the glory of the gospel? or, in other words, what is there in the heart of a fallen creature, which renders him blind to the beauty and glory of the divine nature, shining with so much brightness, in the gospel way of salvation through the blood of Christ? For if man were not a fallen, depraved, vicious creature, he could not be blind to such beauty; a beauty which affects the hearts and engages the attention of all the angelical hosts, who have not that special concern in the affair which we have. They desire, earnestly desire, to look into these things, (1 Pet. i. 12,) and discern in them the manifold wisdom of God. (Eph. iii. 10.)

I. Spiritual blindness consists primarily in the want of spiritual sight; or in not being sensible of the loveliness, beauty, and glory of divine things, as they are in themselves. There is a natural beauty and glory in the natural world, in the sun, moon, and stars, etc., which men see, who are not naturally blind; so there is a holy, heavenly, divine beauty and glory in divine things, in God and Christ, in the law and gospel, which men see, who are not spiritually blind. The word *blindness*, which is applied to the mind, is borrowed from one of our external senses; and in its original signification means a privation of sight. So it was with the man born blind. He was destitute of the sight of his eyes from his birth. But although this outward blindness has, in several respects, a great resemblance to inward spiritual blindness, — as a blind man has

no more idea of natural beauty than one spiritually blind has of divine beauty,—yet there is this great essential difference between the blindness of the eyes and the spiritual blindness of the mind, namely, one is the nature of a calamity simply, the other is not only a calamity, but is also of a vicious nature, in itself properly a crime; as it is seated chiefly in the heart, and consists in being stupid to that divine beauty and loveliness, with which the mind ought to be deeply affected. To have no relish for holy beauty, to have no heart to look upon holiness itself as a lovely thing, is equivalent to having no heart to love the Holy One of Israel, who is the God of glory; which beyond all doubt is criminal, and that in a very high degree.

Were we acquainted with a man, who appeared to be without any spark of generosity or friendship in his heart, a man that cared not in the least for his neighbor's welfare, or for the public good, and even without natural affection to his own offspring, no feeling to any interest but his own, common sense would teach us to look upon such a character as very vicious. And if he was blind to the wants of the poor, and deaf to their cries, we should look upon that blindness and deafness of a criminal nature; and the more blind and deaf, the more criminal should we pronounce the man. And by parity of reason, if we are blind to the loveliness of the most excellent being in the universe, discovered in the clearest and brightest manner, it must, by all holy beings, by all good judges, be looked upon as being of the nature of a crime. If a hard-hearted man justifies himself in being blind to the distressing wants of the poor, every self-justifying plea, in the eyes of his benevolent neighbor, will render his character so much the more vile and odious. And if to be blind to the beauty of the divine nature, ever so clearly revealed, is no crime, then it is no crime not to love God; that is, no crime to live in the breach of the first and great command, and no crime to be without that which is the chief foundation of all religion. And we may as well say, there is no crime in a total disregard to all being, in general, and in being entirely under the government of selfish affections; which is as absurd as to say, that there is nothing in the system worth the least regard but ourselves. And therefore, in the language of Scripture, a "heart of stone," that is, a blind, senseless, stupid heart, is one name given to a wicked, ungodly heart; because, in Scripture account, to be as blind, senseless, and stupid to the glory of divine things as a stone, is of a criminal nature. A heart of stone is a wicked heart. Our blessed Savior, by all he said and did, gave himself a character without a blemish, perfect in beauty. His disciples, who were but poor,

illiterate fishermen, "beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son of God." Others, who were gentlemen of good sense and a polite education, "wise and prudent," were so far from discerning any form or comeliness in him, that they cried, "He is a Samaritan, and hath a devil; why hear ye him?" And therefore, as their blindness to the beauty of his character was not for want of natural abilities, or outward advantages, but owing entirely to the state of their minds, to the frame of their hearts, so it was altogether of a criminal nature; and they had no cloak for their sin, in our Savior's judgment. To say, they had some cloak, and were not altogether criminal in their blindness, is to say, there was some blemish in our Savior's character; which is no better than downright infidelity.

II. Spiritual blindness, which originally consists in a want of relish for holy beauty, for that beauty which is peculiar to holy beings and holy things, and is criminal, considered as such, is capable of being greatly increased and confirmed through the exercise and influence of the various corruptions of a wicked heart, whereby it may become criminal in a still higher degree. And here the God of this world may have a great hand in blinding the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them.

Thus, to a worldly heart, the devil may possibly present the glory of this world, the glory of riches, honors, and pleasures, in so strong a light, as quite to carry away the mind from all serious thoughts about God and Christ, and a future state. "They say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." So that when the gospel is preached in all its glory, it shall not be able to gain the least regard; nay, not so much as to gain the least attention of the mind; and when sermon is over, like the generality of the Jews in Christ's day, they make light of it, and go their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. By this means, multitudes, if not by far the greater part of ungodly men, under the gospel, live and die so inattentive to the gospel scheme, as never to gain any considerable acquaintance with it. They are too indifferent about the matter ever to get what is called a doctrinal knowledge of the Christian religion. So also the young and gay part of mankind are eager in the pursuit of pastimes, merriments, and sports, to the entire neglect of all divine things, while Satan is not wanting to do all he may to push them on, that they may never attend to the glorious gospel of Christ. And while mankind thus serve divers lusts and pleasures, and live in malice and envy besides, hateful and hating one another, the gospel is to them, like the seed which fell by the way-side, all thrown away and lost.

But if, by the various shocking calamities of this life, and the apparent certainty of death, or through the awakening influences of the Holy Spirit, or by any other means, wicked men are rendered attentive to the gospel revelation, and solicitous about their eternal interest; yet if, upon a nearer view of things, their native dislike to God's holy law takes occasion to arise and ferment, it may finally and forever keep them blind to the glory of the gospel of Christ; and all their study and pains may only lead them into that wilderness of secret scepticism, where many professed Christians wander and are lost; not knowing what they are, nor where they are, nor what to believe, nor what to expect; but are at a total uncertainty about every thing themselves, and imagine it entirely owing to want of thought, that all mankind are not as much puzzled as they be; while others are driven, by their prejudices against the divine law and glorious gospel, into open infidelity, not in the least suspecting that the fault is in themselves; while others of just the same temper, through false and delusive joys, from a groundless persuasion of God's love to them, profess the greatest zeal for the gospel, which, at the same time, rightly understood, they disbelieve and hate with all their hearts.

If a man begins to study the Bible, he will soon find, that, according to that book, all mankind are naturally under a law which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal death; and that this law, by which all mankind stand guilty before God, is esteemed holy, just, and good; and that it was in this view God gave his Son to die in our stead; to be made a curse to redeem us from its curse. But how blind must a man be to the wisdom of God in the death of his Son, to whom the divine law appears so far from deserving such high honor, as rather to be a blemish in the divine character, that ever God made it; and how shocked, stumbled, and confounded, must such a man be at the cross of Christ, unless some cunning way can be contrived to delude one's self? "He died for me," says one, "even for me in particular; and I verily believe I shall have life and salvation by him." And thus all difficulties are solved in a moment; for if he is safe, he cares not how. If he is freed from the curse, he is content the law should be reputed holy, just, and good; although, in any other view, he cannot think of it without hatred and heart-risings. "He died to purchase an abatement of the law," says another; not considering that if the law was before just what it ought to be, — holy, just, and good, — it needed no abatement. And if the law was not so good as it might have been, the absolute perfection of the divine nature would have effectually moved the Deity to bring it to

be perfectly holy, just, and good; nor was any mediator needed in the case. "But surely," says the benighted soul whom the god of this world hath blinded, "if I do as well as I can, I shall be saved; for it cannot be just to require of me more than I can do, and then damn me for not doing." O sinner, if you have a heart to do all that in reason you ought to do, to recommend you to the divine favor, do it; and you shall live. But then remember, there is no occasion that Christ should do any thing for you; you will have done enough for yourself; and so Christ is dead in vain, and Christianity is overthrown.

"But," says the sinner,—and in what he says he discovers how blind he is, how far from seeing the beauty of the divine nature as it shines in the law and the gospel, and in all the divine dispensations toward mankind from the beginning; and how far from believing with all his heart, and acquiescing with all his soul, in the gospel way of salvation through the blood of Christ; how loath to take that blame to himself which belongs to him; and how ready to impute iniquity to his Maker,—"but," says the sinner, "if no doings of mine will entitle me to life, if the law I am under requires more than I can do, and damns me for the least failing, then I am in an undone state in spite of my utmost efforts; and where is the justice of this? or how is this consistent with the goodness of the divine nature? For God to bring me into a state of being worse than not to be, and then to hold himself unobliged to grant me any relief, at liberty to have mercy on whom he will have mercy! O that I had never been born! or that I could now cease to be! O, why has God thus dealt with me? Did I sin and fall in Adam? Nay, I never chose him to be my representative. It was he that ate the forbidden fruit, and not I, and that thousands of years before I was born."* So that it appears to him, that the whole of the divine conduct toward him has been hard, unjust, and injurious; and Satan, the god of this world, delights to hold him bound down under this blindness, that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may never shine into his heart; but rather, that as the Israelites provoked God to give them up by their murmurings, (Num. xiv,) so it may come to pass in this case; and so he become more and more irritated against the divine Majesty; till, led by Satan, he may grow bold to catch hold of some false comfort, or to deny that there is any such God, or law, or gospel, and so get ease; or otherwise sink down into despair, and an habitual blasphemous temper, in as near a resemblance of the devil as

* See Mr. Edwards on Original Sin, for the solution of difficulties relative to that doctrine.

he can bring him; who naturally desires that all intelligences may think as ill of God and of his government, as he himself does; — or it may answer Satan's ends in some cases perhaps as well, if he can lead one to believe, that God has altered his mind, has judged his law too severe, has given it up, has appointed his Son to die, and by his death to establish a milder constitution, in which we are not obliged cordially to approve the divine law with application to ourselves, and look only to free grace through Jesus Christ; but allowed to look upon the law as too severe, and upon the gospel as designed in our favor, a remedy against that severity. I say, this perhaps may answer the devil's ends as well; for on this scheme God's original and only law is given up as tyrannical; and the gift of Christ to die, instead of doing honor to the law, is rather an acknowledgment that we had been hardly dealt with, and designed to make us amends, and do us justice; so God, just as the devil would have it, must have passed for a tyrant, had he not given up his law, and appointed his Son to die for us, as it were by way of restitution, to make us amends and do us justice. This is the character the devil, that avowed enemy to God, his law and government, would be glad to fix on the Almighty; that his own expulsion out of heaven, for a breach of the divine law, might be universally looked upon, as a cruel, tyrannical act, through all God's dominion; and it come to be the general opinion, that God, in his case also, is obliged in justice to grant some relief. Nor can any thing suit the devil better, than to see Christian divines grow zealous to prove that his punishment, consistent with the divine perfections, cannot be eternal. Could he bring the whole system to be of this mind, and had he power sufficient on his side, we may easily guess what a grand revolution he would soon make in the empire of the great Eternal. He would treat God the Father as the Jews treated God the Son, and from the same spirit. But the throne of the Almighty is established forever and ever; God reigns, and will forever reign; and blessed be his glorious name forever. And let all that love him say, Amen.

It is plain from Scripture, that Satan, who was once an innocent being, and in a state of probation, and under a law which threatened eternal destruction to the breaker of it, and who for his sin was cast out of heaven and doomed to eternal woes, is now an avowed enemy to God and his government. And if we view him as the god of this world, at the head of the powers of darkness, ruling in the children of disobedience, his attempts to dethrone God in the hearts of men, and set up himself in his stead, his great success may be seen in the

universal ignorance of God, and wide spread of idolatry among all nations of the earth through a long succession of ages. Nor could the thunder of Mount Sinai prevent Israel from making a calf, nor all God's mighty works, nor the warnings and tears of his prophets, keep idols out of the holy land; but from time to time they were eager to adopt the gods and the religious worship of the heathen. And what that was, the apostle tells us in 1 Cor. x. 20. The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.

Such was his enmity against the Most High; and his hatred of the divine law and government is equally manifest in all the methods he takes to prejudice mankind against religion in general; and particularly in all the methods he takes to propagate an ill idea of the divine law, through the Christian world; that thereby the special design of Christ's death to do honor to it, might not be attended to, or, if attended to, the glory of the design not be seen.

And all this conduct of Satan may be easily accounted for. For if the divine law which threatens eternal damnation to the transgressor, is holy, just, and good, then the expulsion of Satan out of heaven for his sin was a righteous act. If all mankind, like Israel of old, who, when the curse of the law was twelve times pronounced, twelve times answered amen, — I say, if all mankind should unite in a disposition understandingly to pronounce the divine law holy, just, and good, they would therein virtually, as with one voice, declare for God, and against Satan; and the justice of his punishment, being thus universally acknowledged in this world, where he claims to be a God, would ungod him, and turn him into a devil, and put him to the utmost confusion; and would above all things tend to destroy his influence, and bring his kingdom to ruin, and open a way for the glory, the transcendent glory, of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be seen among mankind; the consequences of which would be dreadful to the cause of Satan in the world; for only think a moment what the consequences must be. If the law is holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, worthy to be magnified and made honorable, the devil is justly damned. It was a glorious and praiseworthy act in the Almighty, a beauty in his character, for which he deserves to be forever loved and adored through his dominions, to doom him and his adherents to eternal woe. A fallen, sinful world, too, are justly doomed to death. It was a godlike, glorious deed. An atonement of infinite value, to do honor to the law, and set sin in all its horrors, was needed; that God might sit upon a throne of grace, and yet be just. God's giving

his Son to die was a most glorious display of all the divine perfections; Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God. Satan is a liar. All those ill thoughts of God and of his ways, which our wicked hearts are naturally inclined to suggest, and which Satan loves to foment, are false and blasphemous; and the Holy Scriptures are infallibly the word of God; and it is our duty and highest interest to repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ. And if this should become the general sentiment, Satan would soon have no subjects left.

The Holy Scriptures, I say, are infallibly the word of God, once grant the law to be holy, just, and good. No book but the Bible sets God so high, brands sin with such eternal infamy, and so effectually secures the divine authority. And pray, who was the author of this book? Not Satan, I dare say, whose character stands condemned throughout, and who hates the whole genius and spirit of it, with all his heart. Not wicked men, who cannot bear with it, although proved to be divine by mighty works, and signs, and wonders. Not good angels nor good men, who could have no motive thus to impose their own sayings on mankind, as a revelation from Heaven. No being in the universe could be the author of the Bible but God himself: that very law, which tempts a blind, wicked world to infidelity, is a full proof, that God, and none but God, could be its author.

And how void of any real weight, yea, how impious, to holy beings above, in whose eyes the divine character is without a blemish, perfect in beauty, must our grand objection to the divine law appear! "I have no heart to love the Lord, and therefore it ought not to be required of me;" which, if we would be honest, is the only objection against the divine law we have to make in this apostate world; unless we will impiously say, "that he is not infinitely amiable in himself; that is, not an absolutely perfect being, that is, not God; and so does not deserve such supreme respect at our hands;" for it is contrary to common sense, to say that it is difficult to love a perfectly amiable character, which perfectly suits our hearts. And it is a dictate of common sense, that the more amiable a being is, the greater is our obligation to love him, and the greater our blame if we do not; and so, if God is infinitely lovely, our obligation, and consequently our blame, must be infinitely great; and so the penalty of the law is exactly what it ought to be.

"But we have lost our power to love God by the fall, and it is a dictate of common sense, that it is not just to require

more of us than we can do." Pray, what power have we lost? Wicked men have no heart to love God, I grant. This is that in which their wickedness consists; they would not be wicked men, were it not for this. But had they a heart to love him, it would be an easy, sweet, delightful thing. We never complain of want of power to love the world. It is easy to love the world. And why? Because the world is really more lovely than God? No; rather because we have a heart to love the world, but no heart to love God. The world suits our hearts, but God does not. Now, can our having no heart to love God free us from our obligation, or lessen our blame? I appeal to common sense. Am I a father; I expect my child will love, honor, and obey me. Am I a master; I expect to be regarded as such. Should my child, should my servant, plead and say, "I have no heart," I should judge him to blame and worthy of punishment for that very thing. (Mal. i. 6.) "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master; if I then be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." Or shall we say, "The worse men grow, the less to blame they be" — a maxim the devil himself cannot but know to be false, how glad soever he might be, for the sake of his own character, to have it pass for true.

Besides, this is the Scripture account of the matter; for, when God of old required the Israelites to love him with all their hearts, and to serve him with all their souls; and they appeared so forward to engage it; God, who fully knew what they were, and the only difficulty there was in the way of their yielding an entire obedience to his law, breaks out in this very expressive language, (Deut. v. 28, 29:) "I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken; *O that there were such a heart in them!*" As if he had said, "Then there would be no difficulty; and their promises might be trusted;" but, as the Psalmist declares, (Psal. lxxxviii. 37,) "Their heart was not right with him; neither were they steadfast in his covenant;" and again, (Psalm. lxxxi. 11, 12,) "My people *would not* hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up," etc.

In a word, the fault is in our hearts, or the divine character; for it can be nowhere else; to say the fault is not in us, is to say that it is in God. To say that our blindness to the divine glory is not criminal, is to say that there is no glory in the divine nature; and whatever we plead for our justification, is implicitly to God's condemnation. For it is a plain case, that

the Jews could allege nothing to justify their disrelish to the character of Jesus Christ, but what would be of the nature of a reflection upon that character; for, if his character was good and amiable, they were to blame in not being struck with its beauty.

To say that we are dead in sin, by way of excuse, is to say that sin is not sin; for if sin is sin, then to be dead in sin, is the greater sin; that is, to be wholly under the power of sin, is more criminal than to be but partly under its power; otherwise, sin is no more sin. For, if the more sinful we be, the less to blame we are, then sin is no more sin; it has changed its nature, and become an innocent thing.

Let the matter be strictly examined, and it will be found, that spiritual blindness, which has been thought rather a calamity than a vice, is really as much of a criminal nature as any kind of sin we can think of. It contains in it all kinds of wickedness in embryo. It is itself an aversion to all good. Its seat is in the heart. It is not owing to the smallness of our natural capacities; for Satan, who is a being of great abilities, and of a fine genius, is as blind to the beauty of divine things as the most stupid sinner in the world. It is not owing to the want of external instruction; for Judas had as much of that as Peter. It is not owing to the terrors of the law and the fears of hell, and doubting of the love of God; for the Pharisees who were in full expectation of eternal glory, were but the blinder for it. No; rather it is the very spirit of an apostate creature, to be blind to the beauty of the divine nature. It is the beginning of our disaffection to God, and it increases as our disaffection increases. It is the darkness of the prince of darkness, of the same nature with his blindness. It is that which gives the prince of darkness his chief power over us, to make us think, and feel, and act, as he would have us. It is that which constitutes us members of the kingdom of darkness, and prepares us voluntarily and of free choice to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. It makes us full proof against the clearest external manifestations which can be made of the divine glory. Having eyes, we see not; and having ears, we hear not; neither do we understand; although the glories of the God of glory shine all around us, in all his works, and in all his ways; even so that, in the view of the inhabitants of heaven, "the whole earth is full of his glory."

To say that spiritual blindness is no crime, is in effect to affirm that there is no beauty in the divine nature; to assert which, is subversive of all religion, natural and revealed.

To acknowledge that spiritual blindness is a crime, is to own it to be a breach of that law which requires us to love God with all our hearts, on pain of eternal woe. It is therefore to own it to be a crime infinitely blameworthy, and for which the eternal pains of hell are justly due; for every breach of that law is such: and this, beyond all doubt, is the very truth of the case.

But if spiritual blindness be thus criminal, no mercy can be expected from God in the case, on the foot of the law. So far from it, that if he deals with us merely according to strict justice, and renders to us according to our desert, he must punish us with eternal damnation for it; so far, so very far, is God from being obliged to grant us the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit. As the gift of his Son, to be a Redeemer, was an act of the freest grace to a revolted, guilty world, so the gift of his Spirit, to be an enlightener, is an act of grace equally free. He passed by the sinning angels, and did not give his Son to die for them; and he is at liberty among the sons of men to pass by whom he pleases, as to the gift of his Spirit; and in this affair he actually doth have mercy on whom he will have mercy. The elect obtain, and the rest are blinded. And his conduct is plainly vindicable, once granting that our blindness is our sin; and that God might justly have held all mankind bound by law, and never provided relief of any kind. And if we affirm that God could not justly have held all mankind bound by law, but was obliged to provide relief, the whole gospel, which claims to be of mere grace, is overthrown. We must then own the law to be good, and our blindness to be our crime, and God at liberty to relieve us or not, according to the good pleasure of his will, or turn infidels; or, which is as bad, be inconsistent, and so self-condemned, as heretics, after two admonitions, were wont to be, in the apostolic age.

SECTION XI.

THE NATURE OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

As the gospel is hid to them that are lost, and as all who believe not are blind to its glories, so, on the other hand, all true saints see its glory. The light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God, shines unto them. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ shines in their hearts; and beholding the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Thus the matter is expressed in the unerring oracles of truth. But what is the glory seen? how is it seen? what is the nature of the sight? and why is it represented to be peculiar to the saved? and wherein does it differ from what unregenerate men may experience?

I. The glory seen is *divine glory.* It is the beauty and amiableness of God's moral character, on the account of which, the Deity is infinitely lovely in himself. It is the glory of God's moral perfections, which renders him the supreme delight of angels and saints. The apostle expressly calls it "the glory of the Lord;" and again, "the glory of God." It is the very glory and beauty of the divine nature itself; a glory as peculiar to God as his own divinity is; yea, it is the brightness of the very divinity itself. So that he who hath seen this glory, hath, in the language of Scripture, seen God, (Matt. v. 8,) and known God, (John xvii. 3; 1 John ii. 4,) and consequently is able to distinguish between the true God, and all other beings, real or imaginary; as he who hath seen the natural sun can distinguish it from a glowworm. In reference to this, therefore, all true saints are spoken of in Scripture as having an unction from the Holy One, whereby they know all things, (1 John ii. 20,) because he who rightly sees God, as he has manifested himself in the gospel, does virtually know the whole of Christianity; yea, the whole of divine revelation; and therefore it is added by the apostle, "And ye need not that any man teach you, but the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie." And on this account it is represented as impossible that such should be seduced, by the most artful heretics, to imbibe that false idea of God, which is the spirit, life, and soul, of all their false schemes of religion; for as this anointing hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And therefore it is represented as being impossible the elect should be deceived, (Matt. xxiv. 24;) while, on the other hand, it is declared, that all that dwell upon the earth shall worship the beast, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. (Rev. xiii. 8.) Thus the glory seen is the brightness, beauty, amiableness of God's true and real character, as exhibited to view on the cross of Christ.* But, —

* What that character of God is, which is exhibited to view on the cross of Christ, and what is implied in its being glorious, has been already shown. God our Creator was in himself infinitely worthy of our supreme love; and so his law which required this on pain of eternal death, was a glorious law; and so it was a

II. How is this glory seen? This sight of the glory of God is no abstract metaphysical idea, hatched in the fancy of philosophic, speculative men: far from it. Not many wise men, not many learned, says the apostle, but the foolish things of this world hath he called. Nor is it any thing irrational and visionary, the fruit of the teeming imagination of melancholy souls. No, it is perfectly rational, and divinely noble. It is not seen by the eyes of the body, nor is it seen by the imagination, nor is it seen by the force of a penetrating genius. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." It is often "hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes." A poor, illiterate fisherman, divinely enlightened, might see it with as much ease as he could behold the glory of the sun shining in its strength. All true saints, in the apostolic age, saw this divine glory, how mean soever their birth, how low soever their genius, as St. Paul affirms, — "We *all*, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord."

But how did they see it? Pray tell me: how is the beauty of any character seen among men? Universal experience teaches us, that characters appear agreeable or disagreeable, just as they suit our taste or not. To an angel, who has a taste for holy beauty, God's moral character appears infinitely amiable: but to the devil, who is a being of a contrary taste, God's moral character appears just the reverse. To the Pharisees, no character more odious than that of Jesus Christ; but at the same time, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were charmed with this man. To the Jewish nation in general, who groaned under the Roman yoke, and longed for a Messiah to set them at liberty, to make them victorious, rich, and honorable; a Messiah in the character of a temporal prince, even such a one as they expected, would have suited their hearts to perfection, and so have naturally appeared a glorious Messiah; and the news of his coming, of his victories, and of his rising, spreading kingdom, would have been glorious news. Such a gospel would have been received among them as a glorious gospel; there would have been no vail on their hearts; none would have been blind to its

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glorious thing in God to give his Son to die to do it honor, to declare his righteousness that he might be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus. And therefore, to see the glory of God in the face of Christ, implies a sight of the glory of God as Creator and Lawgiver, and of the glory of his law; for Christ on the cross, dying to do honor to the law, is glorious only on supposition the law was a glorious law, and worthy of this honor; as has been already proved. These things are hinted now, that they may be kept constantly in the reader's view; because there are false Christs, and false gospels, and false glories, with which multitudes are deluded.

beauties; nor would its glories have been hid from any: but rather the carnal Jews, in a body beholding in this Messiah the greatest worldly glory, would have been changed into the same image, had every answerable affection excited in their hearts. Had he thus come to his own, his own would have received him with all their hearts, joyfully enlisted under his banner, and followed him to battles, to victories, to universal empire; the very thing their hearts desired. But at the same time, a Messiah of such a character as this, would have charmed them: the character of Jesus of Nazareth shocked them to the last degree. "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Thus differently, to persons of different tastes, did the same character appear, for the carnal mind savors earthly things, but the spiritual mind the things which be of God; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In regeneration, there is a new, divine, and holy taste and relish begotten in the heart, by the immediate influences of the Spirit of God. And thus God opens our eyes; and thus God shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; or, as the same thing is expressed in different language, thus God gives them "a heart to know the Lord;" and thus he "circumcises their hearts" to love the Lord, gives them "eyes to see," and "ears to hear," and a "heart to understand."

Spiritual blindness is not owing to the want of a penetrating genius, or to want of doctrinal knowledge; for the devil hath both these to a great degree, but still is as blind to the beauty of the divine nature, as the most ignorant Hottentot in Africa; for the moral character of the Deity is, above all things in the universe, contrary to the habitual temper of his heart. That cannot appear lovely to us, which every bias of our hearts inclines us to hate; but Heaven has declared, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." And the same divine revelation hath, in perfect consistency, as expressly declared, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But in order to discern spiritually, the man himself must become spiritual; that is, be born of the Spirit; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And if Nicodemus said, "How can these things be," yet that was so far from a solid objection against the truth, that it was rather an illustration of it.

That the idea of a natural beauty supposes an internal sense, implanted by our Creator, by which the mind is capacitated, to discern such kind of beauty, is clearly illustrated and proved by a late ingenious philosopher.* And that the idea of spiritual beauty supposes an internal spiritual sense, communicated to the soul by the Spirit of God, in the work of the new creation, is also as clearly illustrated and proved, by a late divine, whose praise is in all the churches.† It is needless, therefore, at present to enter further into this subject.

III. As to the special nature of this kind of knowledge, which the apostle calls "the knowledge of the glory of God," it is different from every species of knowledge in the universe, not only as it is, in a peculiar sense, of divine original, but also as it is in itself of a divine and holy nature. To see the holy beauty of God's moral character, to see the beauty of holiness, to have holiness appear beautiful and seem lovely to the soul, is of the same nature as to love holiness; but to love holiness, is holiness itself. Among the peculiar people of God, of old, they had a holy anointing oil, with which they anointed, and by which they sanctified their tabernacle, altar, priests, etc. (Exod. xl.) This was the type; the antitype of which the apostle thus expresses, in the forecited text, as that which is common to all true saints, who are spiritual priests, consecrated to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 John ii. 20.) "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "The anointing teacheth you of all things." And perhaps the same thing is referred to in Rev. iii. 18: "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." It is an unction from the Holy One, a holy anointing, a holy calling. In the same degree that God appears lovely to the soul, in the same degree is he actually loved. The exercise of love is always in proportion to the degree of our sense of the divine beauty. For, beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image. The affections excited are answerable to the views.‡ A sense of the divine loveliness, if

* Mr. Hutchinson, on Beauty and Virtue, p. 8, 15.

† Mr. Edwards, on Religious Affections, p. 158, 166.

‡ And by the way, this may show the difference between a rational conviction that God is lovely, and a sense of his loveliness. A man may from rational arguments be convinced in his conscience, that God is lovely; and yet have no sense of his loveliness in his heart, nor any love to him. Satan knew in his conscience, that the holy character which God gave of Job, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man," was an amiable character; but this character was so far from exciting love, that it excited envy and hatred in his heart. He wished to be able to prove Job a hypocrite, that is, that all his love to God arose merely from self-love. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" So a wicked man may be convinced in his conscience, that God is an amiable being; and yet be so wicked, as that he cannot bear to think that any saint on earth loves God for his own loveliness; and the reason may be learnt from 1 John iii. 12.

we may so speak, is love in embryo. Esteem of, delight, and complaisance in the moral character of the Deity, is love in internal exercise. A life devoted to his service, to advance his honor and interest in the world, is love operating in good works. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." But each of these are plainly of the same nature, holy and divine; and each are equally enjoined as matter of duty in that first and great command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Therefore we are by God himself thus called upon: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart." (Jer. iv. 9.) And again: "Make you a new heart and a new spirit." (Ezek. xviii. 31.)

It is the duty of all, to whom the gospel comes, to look upon it as a glorious gospel, and to have their hearts charmed with its beauty. To be blind to its glory is criminal, as was before shown; and to see its glory is, for the same reason, a duty; and, therefore, all who are blind to the glory of the gospel, and so disbelieve and reject it, are expressly threatened with eternal damnation. But such an infinite punishment supposes the crime to be infinitely great. The infinite greatness of the crime supposes we are under infinite obligations to the contrary; that is, under infinite obligations to look upon the gospel as glorious, and cordially to believe and embrace it. And indeed its own intrinsic infinite beauty lays us under infinite obligations; and not to esteem what is so infinitely worthy of our esteem, must be infinitely criminal.

To say, that it is not our duty to look upon the gospel of Christ as a glorious gospel, — that is, to look upon the divine perfections therein so clearly manifested as glorious, — is to say, that we are not obliged to look upon God himself as a glorious being, when set in the clearest light before our minds; which is, in effect, to say, that it is not our duty to love God; which is to give up natural and revealed religion both at once, and to pronounce the deepest depravity perfectly innocent.

Had mankind, to whom the gospel comes, a genuine relish for holy beauty, a taste for the beauty of God's true character, they would naturally discern the glory of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. If they knew God the Father, they could not fail to know his Son. Had mankind as high a relish for divine glory as they have for the glory of this world, the glory of the gospel would strike the mind as naturally as the glory of an earthly kingdom now does.

Had the Jews, for instance, had as high a taste for a spiritual Messiah as they had for a temporal one, Christ crucified would as naturally have appeared glorious, as their expected Messiah,

a temporal prince, was wont to do, in their fond imaginations. We have no inability to know and love God and Jesus Christ, but what is altogether of a criminal nature; and therefore our Savior's conduct may be vindicated in pronouncing such a heavy woe on the inhabitants of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they repented not. For if the fault is wholly in us, it is no doubt increased as our external advantages are increased.

IV. But why is this kind of knowledge, of which we are speaking, constantly represented in Scripture as peculiar to the saved, (1 Cor. i. 18,) to the called, (ver. 24,) to the spiritual, (chap. ii. 14,) to the changed, (2 Cor. iii. 18,) to those who believe, (chap. iv. 4,) to those who love God and keep his commands, (1 John ii. 4,) and who have eternal life? (John xvii. 3.) And why is it affirmed, that "whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, nor known him"? (1 John iii. 6;) and that he that doeth evil hath not seen God? (3 John 2;) and of every natural man, without exception, "neither can he know them"? (1 Cor. ii. 14.) It is, in a word, because it implies a contradiction that it should be otherwise; for this kind of knowledge, and its effects, are necessarily connected. And this kind of knowledge cannot exist in an unregenerate mind; for, to use the language of Scripture, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and "the carnal mind is enmity against God." And what fellowship hath light with darkness? Or what concord is there between sin and holiness? Or what agreement between a carnal heart and that character which it is at enmity against? Our Savior judged it implied the greatest absurdity, that Satan should cast out Satan; that is, that Satan should be against himself. But it is plainly an absurdity equally great, to suppose that two intelligent beings, of characters as diametrically opposite as sin and holiness, should relish each other's characters, and appear amiable in each other's eyes. Once granting that fallen man is totally dead in sin, destitute of the least spark of spiritual life, of the least remainder of divine relish, or, in the words of the apostle, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," — and by the carnal mind, he declares himself to mean every man who is destitute of the spirit of Christ, (Rom. viii. 7—9,) — I say, once granting this, and it is certain, and is even capable of strict demonstration, from the nature of things, that a sense of the amiableness of God's true and real character must of necessity be peculiar to the regenerate. False notions of God may ravish an unregenerate heart, but his true character every such heart is in fact at enmity against. Hence the gospel will be hid from all natural men, be they Jews or Greeks, however wise, however prudent, however

penetrating, and however well instructed; and that even while sitting under the ministry of Christ himself, who spake as never man spake; and notwithstanding all the preaching of his inspired apostles. Thus the Scriptures affirm that, in fact, it proved; and thus the reason of the thing shows it must forever prove.

It implies a contradiction to suppose the human heart should be charmed with a character just opposite to its own; and nothing can be plainer than that the character of the Holy One of Israel is diametrically opposite to the temper of one who is quite dead in sin. The divine character, therefore, must be altered in our imagination, or we, in fact, be born again, or God can never appear to us an amiable being. If we suppose God's character altered and accommodated to our taste, we may be charmed with the fiction, dead in sin as we are; but the clearer view a carnal man hath of the truth, the more certain will he be that the love of God is not in him. (Rom. vii. 8, 9.)

It is true, many a carnal man is ravished to think that God loves him, and will save him; but in this case, it is not the true character of God which charms the heart; it is not God that is loved. Strictly speaking, he only loves himself; and self-love is the source of all his affections. Or, if we call it love to God, it is of no other kind than sinners feel to one another; "for sinners love those that love them." The carnal Israelites, who gave the fullest proof of their disaffection to the divine character, as exhibited by God himself before their eyes, yet were once full of this kind of love at the side of the Red Sea. Our being ravished ever so much in a belief that God loves us, is no sign that God's true character would suit our taste, had we right notions of it. The hypocritical Galatians loved Paul while they considered him as the instrument of their conversion, and means of their salvation; but on further acquaintance with the man, they turned his enemies; for his character, rightly understood, did not suit their taste.

If God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; if he cannot look upon sin but with infinite detestation; if all those views, affections, thoughts, words, and actions, which are sweet to the taste of a carnal heart, are so infinitely odious in the eyes of God, as to appear to him worthy of the eternal pains of hell, as is in fact the case, (Gal. iii. 10,) it is as impossible that a carnal heart should see a beauty in the divine character, as that it should view its own character as being infinitely odious; for one implies the other. If it is beautiful in God to be affected toward my character as in fact he is, my character must be infinitely odious; nor can I at any time, from the heart, look

upon God as a lovely being, without looking upon myself as infinitely hateful; for that being whose nature it is to look upon me as infinitely odious, is not lovely, unless I am in fact infinitely odious. When our Savior, speaking to the Pharisees, said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" these words determined his character in their eyes; and it implies a contradiction to suppose that Christ's character might have appeared lovely to them, without their own appearing odious, answerable to the import of his words. But there was nothing in a Pharisee's heart to lead him to look upon his own character in such an odious light; and, therefore, all our Savior's declarations, and all his miracles, did but exasperate them. The more they knew of Christ, the more they hated him. As it was natural to them to approve of their own character, so it was natural to condemn his; for, if the fault was not in them, it was in him. To say it was not in him, was to own that they were serpents, and a generation of vipers, worthy of eternal destruction. To look upon him as altogether lovely, was to look upon themselves as infinitely odious. But this was diametrically opposite to every bias in their hearts; their old heart, therefore, must be taken away, and a new heart be given them, or they could never view things in this light. And thus our Savior understood the matter; and, therefore, on a time, speaking to a Pharisee, he said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

V. But wherein does this peculiar knowledge of God differ from what natural men have actually had, or might have? If they may have all knowledge, and understand all mysteries, so as to speak as it were with the tongues of men and angels, (1 Cor. xiii.;) if they may be enlightened, and taste the heavenly gift, (Heb. vi.;) if they may receive the word with joy, (Matt. xiii.;) if they may escape the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (2 Pet. ii. 20;) if they may have such a ravishing sense of the divine goodness, as the Israelites had at the Red Sea; and such an affecting sense of his majesty, greatness, power, holiness, and justice, as they had at Mount Sinai, when they stood trembling before the mountain, and were so ready to promise, whatsoever the Lord our God shall command, that will we do, and be obedient; and such a high and heart-abasing sense of the most high God, who liveth forever, as Nebuchadnezzar had, when he praised, and extolled, and honored the King of heaven, all whose works are truth; and those who walk in pride he is able to abase, (Dan. iv. 34, 37;) — if they may have all this, what is it they

cannot have? I answer, in one word, the holy beauty of God's real moral character: this is what they never had the least idea of. The most enlightened, affected, the devoutest natural man that ever lived, as to this, is as blind as the most ignorant, stupid sinner in the world. That this is in fact the case, is evident from this, that all who behold the glory of God are actually "changed into the same image;" which was not the case with the wicked Israelites, nor with Nebuchadnezzar, nor with the stony-ground hearers, nor with those in 1 Cor. xiii. Heb. vi. 2 Pet. ii.

But as the nature of divine illumination is so largely and accurately stated in Mr. Edwards's Treatise on Religious Affections, and his Sermon on Jam. ii. 19, I shall refer the reader to these pieces, and proceed.

SECTION XII.

THE EFFECTS OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

A VIEW of all the moral perfections of God, shining in their brightest glory in the gospel way of saving sinners, exhibits to the mind an evidence of the truth of the gospel, entirely new, which never struck the mind before; an evidence of such a nature, as removes all those natural prejudices against the truth which tended to keep the mind in suspense, notwithstanding all the external proofs from the miracles, prophecies, etc., and an evidence, in its own nature, the most convincing and satisfying; and whereby the whole heart is gained, and brought over to a full and thorough belief of the gospel. So that now, and not till now, is the gospel believed to be true, with all the heart; so as to induce us to sell all for the pearl of great price, and from the heart to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ; venturing our all, for time and eternity, upon the truth of his Messiahship, of his divine mission, and of the news which he has brought to our ears.

When the gospel, which is hid from all natural men, comes to be revealed, internally revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, in all its divine glories, agreeable to Matt. xi. 25; 2 Cor. iii. 18, iv. 6, it is known to be from God, from the divinity of its nature; for it appears to be what the apostle's words import, "the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) And to use the words of a late writer, "He

that truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme glory of those things which are divine, does, as it were, know their divinity intuitively; he not only argues that they are divine, but he sees that they are divine; he sees that in them wherein divinity chiefly consists; for in this glory, which is so vastly and inexpressibly distinguished from all other glory, does mainly consist the true notion of divinity: God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divinity. They, therefore, that see the stamp of this divine glory in divine things, they see divinity in them, they see God in them, and so see them to be divine; because they see that in them wherein the truest idea of divinity does consist." He therefore who sees the glory of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, must know Jesus to be the Son of God, and his gospel to be divine; for he must be the Son of Him whose image he bears, and that gospel must be from God, which is, in its own nature, so godlike. Besides, as the same author adds, "This sense of the spiritual excellency and beauty of divine things, does also tend directly to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel, as there are very many of the most important things declared in the gospel, that are hid from the eyes of natural men, the truth of which does in effect consist in this excellency, or does so immediately depend upon it, and result from it, that in this excellency's being seen, the truth of those things is seen. As soon as ever the eyes are opened to behold the holy beauty and amiableness that is in divine things, a multitude of most important doctrines of the gospel, that depend upon it, which all appear strange and dark to natural men, are at once seen to be true; as for instance: men, by seeing the true excellency of holiness, do see the glory of all those things which reason and Scripture show to be in the divine being. And hereby they see the truth of all that the Scripture declares concerning God's glorious excellency and majesty, his being the fountain of all good, the only happiness of the creature, etc.; and this again shows the mind the truth of what the Scripture teaches concerning the evil of sin against so glorious a God; and also what the Scripture teaches concerning sin's just desert of that dreadful punishment which it reveals; and also concerning the impossibility of our offering any satisfaction or sufficient atonement for that which is infinitely evil and heinous. And this again shows the truth of what the gospel reveals concerning the necessity of a Savior, to offer an atonement of infinite value for sin. And this sense of spiritual beauty enables the soul to see the glory of those things which the gospel reveals concerning the person of Christ; and so enables to see the

exceeding beauty and dignity of his person, appearing in what the gospel exhibits of his word, works, acts, and life; and this apprehension of the superlative dignity of his person, shows the truth of what the gospel declares concerning the value of his blood and righteousness; and so the infinite excellency of that offering he has made to God for us, and so its sufficiency to atone for our sins, and recommend us to God; and thus the Spirit of God discovers the way of salvation by Christ, etc. The truth of all these things appears to the soul only by the imparting that spiritual taste of divine beauty which has been spoken of; they being hidden things to the soul before." Thus far this author, who has handled this subject at large, and with greater accuracy than I have seen it done by any other writer.*

And agreeable to these sentiments, it was an openly avowed maxim in the apostolic age, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." And they every where publicly declared, that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." They promised salvation to every man who with all his heart believed the gospel to be true, and threatened damnation to none but infidels, according to their master's commission. Mark xvi. 15, 16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Not that they imagined, that every one who professed to believe the gospel with all his heart, really did so. They knew there might be a partial and ineffectual conviction of the truth. They well remembered how Judas heard all Christ's discourses, and saw all his miracles, and professed to believe as well as Peter, and how he turned out in the end. And they well knew, that as both were under equal external advantages, to see all the external evidences of Christ's divine mission, so that peculiar kind of faith, which Peter had, was entirely the result of divine illumination, as their Master had in his lifetime expressly declared. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And this kind of faith they called believing with all the heart, and asserted it to be peculiar to the regenerate, and infallibly connected with eternal life; a faith, in its own nature, specifically different from the faith of devils and of wicked men, who are all equally blind to the glory of the moral perfections of

* Mr. Edwards, on Religious Affections, p. 182, 199.

the Deity, shining so brightly in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

And now, when the gospel is understood, seen in its glory, and believed with all the heart, it immediately begets every answerable affection in the soul. For we are begotten through the gospel, (1 Cor. iv. 15;) begotten by the word of truth, (Jam. i. 18;) sanctified by the truth, (John xvii. 17;) and particularly, are begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, (1 Pet. i. 3.) While the glory of the gospel is hid, it produces none of these effects upon the soul. "For if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost." (2 Cor. iv. 3.) But when we know the truth, the truth makes us free, (John viii. 32;) or, in the language of St. Paul, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." *

Sometimes, in the Scripture, the effect produced by the knowledge of the truth, is considered and spoken of as one thing, and every holy affection is summed up under one comprehensive name; as, the image of God; the law written in the heart; Christ formed in the soul; coming to God by Christ; reconciliation to God through Christ; etc. At other times, there are a great variety of names used to mark out the various affections excited in the mind by the knowledge of the truth; the various affections toward God, and toward Christ, and toward the children of God, and toward mankind in general, and toward relatives, husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, etc.; and toward enemies; and toward sin; and toward ourselves considered as sinners; and toward the things of this world, and of the world to come, etc.; all which are the native result of the knowledge of the truth.

When Moses came down from the mount, where for a long time he had conversed with the God of Israel, who manifested himself by a visible glory to him, he brought down the image

* Some of the above texts are alleged by some writers to prove, that a belief that Christ died for me in particular, that my sins are pardoned, and that I shall be saved, begets every Christian grace. And this is all the regeneration they allow of. But in this case we are begotten, not by the truth, nor by the gospel; for not one of these particulars are therein revealed; yea, a man may be full of religious affections from such a belief, and yet at the same time look upon the gospel of Christ as "jargon" — "hideous jargon." Yea, it is a lie which begets these affections, namely, that God had forgiven the sins of an impenitent sinner; and, therefore, not the God of truth, but the father of lies, is the author of this kind of regeneration. And this is one of his stratagems to blind the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Thus he transforms himself into an angel of light, to delude poor sinners with false hopes and false joys; to the end they may never know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; and so never have eternal life. See Mr. Cudworth's Further Defence.

of this visible glory with him: his face shone. He put a vail on his face, to hide the bright lustre thereof from the eyes of the congregation, who were not able to behold. So a vail was on the hearts of the unbelieving Jews in the apostolic age. The glory of the gospel was hid by this vail from them, even from all that were lost. But we all, with open, with unvailed face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are, says the apostle, in allusion to the face of Moses, "changed into the same image:" into a holy, divine, a glorious frame of heart, resembling the glory we behold.

Changed into the same image. — The image of what? Of the moral perfections of the divine nature. Doth God view himself so worthy, so infinitely worthy of supreme love, and honor, and universal obedience, as infinitely good and merciful as he is, yet sedately to judge, that the least defect in us deserves eternal woe; and that it does not become him, as the Judge of all the earth, in any one instance, ever to grant a pardon but through the mediation of his own Son, and on the sole account of his righteousness and atonement? The divinely enlightened soul has the same views, in kind, and an answerable frame of heart. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest; for destruction is my due, and hell my proper home; and should strict justice take place, all heaven ought forever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, crying, Amen, Hallelujah. Yea, so bad am I, that any thing better than eternal damnation is too good for me. It is even unmeet such vileness should be passed over by the righteous Governor of the world without a testimony of his infinite abhorrence. There could be no hope in my case, were it not for the mediation, merits, and atonement of the Son of God. It could not have been just and right to have pardoned such a wretch, had not he been set forth to be a propitiation. But now God can be just; therefore to free grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, I look. Here is all my hope. And I give up myself to God through the great Mediator, to love him, and be forever his; esteeming it the fittest thing in the world forever to live to his glory, and the happiest thing to delight in him as the Supreme Good. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire beside thee." And thus they are changed into the same image; and thus God accomplishes his word, "I will write my law in their heart." *The law written in the heart.* This is another name given to the same thing; for the law is a transcript of the divine nature, the very image of God. As the law was written in indelible characters on tables of stone,

by the finger of God, of old, so now, views and dispositions answerable to the nature of the law, become habitual in the heart, through the influences of the Spirit of God, according to the measure of grace received; and this becomes the genuine language of the soul. "How reasonable is it to love with all my heart such an infinitely glorious and amiable being; and delight with all my soul in such perfect beauty; and take up my everlasting contentment in the fountain and source of all good. How fit, that I should be wholly for him, whose I entirely am; and be at his beck, whose hands formed me; and at his disposal, who is Lord of all things, and whose rectitude is absolutely perfect, and whose goodness and wisdom are infinite, and who has given his Son to die for a lost world; and how beautiful, how much to be desired, that all on earth should unite as brethren, to live in the dearest love and harmony, as one happy family, under the government of the common Father of our spirits, and who is ready to become our everlasting Father and Friend through Jesus Christ! O that all the human race would join, with one heart, to repent, and return, and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ! Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." And thus he begins to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; which was the very temper of Jesus Christ. And so Christ is formed in him; which is another name given to the same thing, and the import of it may be thus expressed.

Christ formed in the soul. — "He took not on him the nature of angels. Those of them who fell, needed a Savior as much as we; and they were a nobler rank of beings; but they were passed by; and so might we have been, and God had been forever righteous. His law was holy, just, and good. Every mouth was stopped. The whole world stood guilty before God. How free was the grace, how great was the goodness, that provided such a Savior for such a world as this! What love to God, what love to man, induced the Son of God to become incarnate; to honor the divine law by his obedience and death, and open a way for God to communicate his grace to us, and for us to return to God, and be forever happy in him! To thee, O Lord, I return, with my whole heart, through Jesus Christ. In his name alone I come. O, may I be found in him, and have on his righteousness, and be accepted in the beloved; and be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise to the day of redemption, sanctified wholly to the Lord! O, may I be in Christ as the branch is in the vine,

and partake of his nature and spirit; of his fulness receive, and grace for grace; that the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, and brought him from heaven, and carried him through all the labors of his life, and sufferings of his death, may also be in me; the same love to God and regard to the honor of his law, the same love to a lost world and concern for their salvation. And from this spirit, from which the Son of God became incarnate, lived and died, may I always stand ready to sacrifice in his cause all my earthly comforts, and, if need be, to lay down my life." And thus, in these views, a spirit answerable to the temper of Jesus Christ, and to the design and spirit of his mediatorial office and work, is formed in the soul; and we become at heart his disciples. And he is able to save them to the uttermost, who thus come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Them that come unto God by him. — Another description of the same thing. That *come unto God.* Unto God, the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honor, and universal obedience, and the supreme good; in a view of whose glory, an inclination to come is begotten in the soul. That come unto God *by him.* Encouraged by his mediation, righteousness, and atonement, we are emboldened to enter into the presence of the Holy One of Israel, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and before whom such as we must needs appear infinitely odious and abominable. And thus, if any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, possessed of a relish, of views, and affections, he never had before; yea, all old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. And this whole change is of God, who thus reconciles us to himself by Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. v. 17, 18.)

Reconciles us to himself by Jesus Christ. — It is through Jesus Christ, who has secured the honor of the divine government, that God communicates those influences of his Holy Spirit, by which our eyes are opened to behold the glory of the Lord. And it is through Jesus Christ that the enlightened sinner is emboldened to return to God. And so this reconciliation is brought about wholly through the mediation of Jesus Christ; and in it, we are really reconciled to God, against whom we were before at enmity.

Reconciled to God. — To God's true and real character exhibited in his law, and ratified on the cross of Christ. We are reconciled to it, as to a character, in itself, without a blemish, perfect in beauty; and so begin to rejoice that God, his law and government, are just what they are, from a sense of their

superlative excellency in themselves; no longer disposed, as we used to be, to wish they were different from what they are; rather inclined to say, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." So reconciled, as that now the divine law is cordially received as a rule of life by us, and our hearts begin to echo to the language of holy David, in its commendation. (Ps. cxix.)

Among all effects of divine illumination, there is none more remarkable in itself, or followed with more remarkable consequences, than this, that hereby the true convert, who used to be an enemy to the divine law, is brought understandingly and heartily to love it, and to make it the rule of his life. The grace of God teaches him to deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Nor is there any thing which more evidently distinguishes a true conversion from every counterfeit than this. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." For every natural man, of whatever sect or party in the Christian world, and however religious in his way, is at heart an Antinomian in this particular. He doth not, in fact, receive the divine law, in its true meaning and real extent, as the rule of his life; yea, so far from it, that if he should go about to do it, and if his conscience should in the mean time be awakened to understand it, all his religious affections would stand condemned by it in his conscience in a moment; and all his present hopes be struck dead by it at once. For there is not any one thing about him, any thought, word, or action, or any inward bias of heart, in conformity to the divine law, in a natural man; but one natural man is as really dead in sin, and devoid of all true holiness, as another; and the only thing that renders it possible for any natural man to think otherwise of himself, than that he is dead in sin, is ignorance of the true nature of the law. "Without the law, sin was dead. I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." What greater change; therefore, can happen, than to be brought acquainted with the divine law, to be slain by it, and yet brought to love it, as holy, just, and good, so as to receive it cordially as a rule of life? What a marvellous alteration must this make in the whole system of our views and affections, and in the whole tenor of our lives! Even as great as to be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God.

Every thing which comes into the view of the divinely enlightened soul, harmoniously unites together to induce him

cordially to receive the divine law as a rule of life, by which to regulate every inward bias, every thought, word, and action. A view of God as an infinitely glorious being, and our common Creator, shows how reasonable and beautiful it is for all mankind, who are fellow-creatures, children of the same common stock, to unite together as brethren, in supreme love and honor, and universal obedience to the Father of the universe, the God of glory, just as the divine law requires. A view of the divine law, as holy, just, and good, a glorious law, antecedent to the consideration of the gift of Christ, and the work of redemption by him, shows that our original obligations to do so are infinite. And this is also implied in a view of sin as an infinite evil; and in the view of vindictive justice as an amiable perfection in the Deity; as also in a view of God as the supreme good. A view of the incarnation, life, and death of the Son of God, to do honor to the divine law, in order to open a way for the pardon of the penitent believer, consistent with the honor of the supreme Governor of the world, sets before us the highest possible proof, of an external nature, of the goodness and excellency of the divine law; even the highest proof that could have been given by God the Father, or God the Son. Besides, we have herein a perfect obedience to the divine law, recommended to us by an example in itself the most engaging; set before us on design that we should imitate it; and set us by Him who left his Father's bosom, and died on the cross, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Add to all this, the divinely enlightened soul, in consequence of the new taste and relish communicated in regeneration, (Rom. viii. 5,) begins to discern that it is not only the fittest, but the happiest thing in the world; yea, is even the beginning of eternal life, and foretaste of heaven, to aspire to be holy as God is holy, to love God, and live to him, and live upon him, through Jesus Christ, and love the people of God, and love all mankind, and be and do in every respect as the divine law requires; besides the infinite obligations we are under hereunto, in point of gratitude to God and to his Son, for the infinite goodness manifested in the work of our redemption. To all which we may add the eternal rewards which are to be granted by Jesus, our final Judge, to all his obedient disciples, at the last day, for services so sinfully defective, as not fit to be accepted, were it not for our union with and relation to him, who is God's beloved Son, and heir of all things; for at that day, not so much as a cup of cold water, given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall be overlooked, or pass unrewarded. The highest rewards which the kings of the earth give to

victorious generals, who have ventured their lives in their service in the wars, is some title of honor, or post of profit, a laurel leaf, a mere trifle; but Jesus gives an eternal reward in heaven, for but a cup of cold water. These, and all other things, which come into the view of the divinely enlightened soul, harmoniously unite together to induce him cordially to give God the throne, resign to his authority, be at his command, and receive his law as a perfect, universal rule, according to which, to feel and think, to speak and act, through all his life, and to look upon himself infinitely to blame, wherein soever he comes short of yielding that perfect love and obedience which the law requires.

And what must be the consequence of this, considering that the best are sanctified but in part, and that the law requires sinless perfection? What but "the law is spiritual; I am carnal, sold under sin; O wretched man that I am!" What but a continual sense of infinite blame, a life of self-loathing, and self-abhorrence, of godly sorrow, of penitency, of broken-heartedness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, of watching, of prayer, of fighting, of striving, of running, of wrestling, etc., just as the New Testament represents the Christian life to be? And what must be the consequence of all this, but a growing sense of our need of, and absolute dependence upon, the free grace of God through Jesus Christ for pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace every day? "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." And thus true saints are trained up to prize the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier, and live wholly by faith; while, at the same time, they are perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

And in this view, it is easy to see the reason why a life of universal obedience is constantly represented in the Holy Scriptures as peculiar to true saints, in distinction from all false professors; as true saints are the only persons in the world who cordially receive the divine law as a rule of life. (Matt. vii. 21, 27; xiii. 23. John xv. 2, 6, 14. Jam. ii. 10. 1 John ii. 3—6; iii. 3, 10; v. 18, etc.)

And in this view, it is easy to see the reason why humility is, at the same time, and in perfect consistence, represented through all the Scriptures as the chief part of a good man's character. A hypocrite being ignorant of the divine law, the more religious he is, the more proud and conceited will he be: but with a true saint, it is just the contrary. For if the divine law is his rule of duty, and if his obligations perfectly to conform thereto are infinite, and his blame for every defect propor-

tionably great, and if the fault is wholly in him, if his remaining spiritual blindness is altogether criminal, his stupidity to the beauty of divine things wholly vicious, his want of perfect love to God and Christ, and the most tender regard to the welfare of mankind, inexcusable wickedness, — if this be the true state of the case, and if he views things in this light, a mean and low thought of himself, and an answerable frame of heart, as he has all the reason in the world for it, must be a very essential part of his character. "Behold his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him." (Hab. ii. 4.) No greater proof that a man is ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus, than spiritual pride reigning in his heart. The graceless Pharisee, ignorant of the true sense of the divine law, was ready to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" while to the penitent publican, in a view of the truth, it was altogether natural to smite upon his breast, and say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." The Pharisees were ready to say, "Behold, we see;" while the holy Psalmist lifts up his cry to heaven, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," which is the genuine language of the heart of the most enlightened saint; for says the apostle, "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And to a man of an humble, broken, contrite heart, it will be easy to bear injuries, to love and forgive enemies; and natural in lowliness of mind to prefer others before himself, to render honor to whom honor is due, and, as much as in him lies, live peaceably with all men, according to the exhortations of the gospel; besides, that such a frame of heart must be an excellent preparative to all social and relative duties; so that the character of a good husband, a good wife, a good parent, a good child, good neighbor, etc., meek, kind, just, honest, faithful, etc., will be the native result of divine illumination. And thus true saints are the salt of the earth, the light of the world; and while others behold their good works, they are constrained to glorify their Father which is in heaven. And the connection between divine illumination and all holy living, is so certain and infallible, that it is declared from heaven, that "he that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." For "we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

And as divine illumination thus lays the foundation for all

Christian graces and duties, so, at the same time, it equally lays a foundation for all Christian comforts and consolation.

A view of God, the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious and amiable being, as manifested in the gospel of Christ, is a source of ineffable joy and consolation to the divinely enlightened soul. The holy beauty of the divine nature is, in itself, the most sweet and ravishing thing in the universe, which can be beheld by angels or men. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," is the language of heaven in a transport; and the ineffable glory of the divine nature is the first and chief thing, which strikes the mind and charms the heart of him that is enlightened. This is life eternal, this is the beginning of heaven, "to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

A view of an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, at the head of the universe, presents before the mind an all-sufficient good; a glorious and ravishing sight to a poor orphan, self-ruined creature, in want of all things; and a sight never before seen, and indeed nowhere else to be seen in heaven or earth. The joys which are the native result of this view, no words can fully express. It is "joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee."

As, in divine illumination, the mind is thoroughly convinced of the truth of the gospel, so it appears to the soul, both that God can, consistently with his honor, and that he is willing to receive to favor, any, the most naked, forlorn, wretched, guilty, ill deserving, of the human race, which shall come unto God by Jesus Christ; and to become a God and father, and friend and portion, to them through him; which is to see even God himself, the infinitely glorious God, the supreme good, presented to his choice, through Jesus Christ, as the portion of his soul. "All things are ready; come unto the marriage." It appears to be a feast. He makes no excuse, but like the man in Matt. xiii. 44, who having found a treasure hid in a field, for joy thereof, he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. And so he drinks of that water spoken of in John iv. 10, 14, which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst; and when he comes sensibly to have God for his God, father, and portion, he is happier than if all the world were his own. (Hab. iii. 17, 18.) Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, etc., yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Therefore said the apostle to the primitive Christians, not in the least dejected for his part, although then a prisoner at Rome, and his converts

in a state of persecution, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." (Phil. iv. 4, 6, 7.) For, in choosing God for our supreme good, all earthly idols are resigned, our treasure is laid up in heaven; and if grace flourishes in our hearts, our comforts will remain, let outward things go as they will. Besides, it is found by experience, that it is good to be afflicted; that afflictions work the peaceable fruits of righteousness; for "all things work together for good to them that love God." And so the heart is reconciled to, yea, rejoiceth in God's ways toward the children of men in this life.

Besides, to see an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, at the head of the universe, is matter of unspeakable joy; both because it is an honor due to him, who is by nature God, to be supreme, to take the throne, to rule and reign, and to be worshipped as God; and because it is infinitely to the advantage of the intellectual system, to be under a government in its own nature absolutely perfect. (Ps. xcvii. 1.) "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." (Ps. xcvi.) "O, sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth. — For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all Gods. — Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. — Say among the heathen, The Lord reigneth. — Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the earth with righteousness, and the people with his truth." (Ps. cxlviii.) "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights: praise him, all ye his angels: praise him, all his hosts," etc., for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven.

Besides, a view of the divine law as holy, just, and good, a glorious law, and of vindictive justice as a beauty in the divine character, dispels those black, gloomy, blasphemous thoughts, which are apt to haunt benighted souls, and gradually leads the mind to discern the holiness, justice, and goodness, of God's general plan of government, as represented in the Holy Scriptures, from the fall of angels down to the day of judgment, and through eternal ages; whereby a heavenly serenity and joy spreads through the souls of the saints, to see

all God's ways to be right, and even those parts of his conduct, which, to many, appear so horrible, to be really beautiful in themselves, worthy of God, and to his eternal honor, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Besides, the exceeding great glory to God and good to the saved, which in time and eternity are, according to the Scriptures, to result from the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Son of God, is an inexhaustible source of joy and consolation, to those who are divinely enlightened; as they are deeply interested in the honor of God and of his Son, and in the welfare of his holy and eternal kingdom. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will toward men," was the joyful song of the heavenly hosts, at the birth of the Savior; and the hearts of all the saints echo to it with ineffable consolation. Moreover, to love God, to love his holy law, to feel every answerable affection toward the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, to present and offer up our lives a living sacrifice to God, to love the people of God, to love all mankind, to love and forgive enemies, to go about the common duties of life in the fear of God, and as his servants, heavenly-minded, of a meek and quiet spirit, composed, sedate, with our loins girt, always watching and always praying, is the happiest way of living on this side of heaven. The exercise of these and all other graces of the Christian life, is itself a pleasure divinely sweet. Wisdom's ways are pleasant, and all her paths are peace. (Prov. iii. 17.) "Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them." In a word, an humble, broken, contrite heart, mortified to all earthly goods, and fortified against all earthly evils, and used to converse with the Deity, is attended with pleasures unspeakably preferable to all this world can boast.

Thus divine illumination lays the foundation for Christian graces and Christian comforts. They are connected together in the experiences of the saints, just as they are in the promises of God's word; for all the promises of God are in Christ, yea, and amen. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls." (Matt. xi. 28, 29.) "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of contrite ones." (Isai. lvii. 15.) "For he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke xviii.

14.) "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him." (John xiv. 21.) Thus Christian graces and Christian comforts go together. And if the graces and comforts of the saints are at any time in a languishing state, it is owing to their spiritual blindness, which is altogether of a criminal nature; and so the fault is entirely their own; for the truths exhibited to view in the gospel, beheld in their glory, are sufficient to make their graces and comforts always abound. And if the graces and comforts of the saints are in a flourishing state, it is entirely owing to spiritual light, or a sense of the glory of divine truths, communicated to them from God, of his mere self-moving goodness and infinite grace through Jesus Christ, to creatures infinitely unworthy: and so all the glory is due to him, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Thus we have taken a view, a very brief, general, imperfect view of the effects of divine illumination; and may now conclude this section with a few remarks.

1. The graces and joys of saints on earth, and saints in heaven, are of the same nature. The same kind of holiness and happiness is begun in divine illumination in this world, as saints are possessed of in heaven, only in a much lower degree. Eternal life is begun in them. (John xvii. 3.) They are passed from death to life. (John v. 24.) They begin to live. They begin to view things and feel toward them as they do in heaven. The same light which now shines, will shine more and more unto the perfect day. (Prov. iv. 18.) At first it is very small, like a grain of mustard-seed; but it is of the same kind with that perfect holiness and happiness which is above. And so it is an earnest of heaven, (Eph. i. 14;) yea, it is of the same kind with the perfect holiness and happiness of Jesus Christ their head, for they are made partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pet. i. 4.) Of his fulness they all receive, and grace for grace, (John i. 16;) for he is the vine, and they are the branches, (John xv. :) all animated by the same spirit, and possessed of the same kind of life. And indeed, there is but one kind of true holiness in the universe, whether viewed in God the Father, or in Christ the Mediator, or in saints who are members of Christ. God is the original fountain and standard of true holiness; the moral law is a transcript of God's moral perfections, the very image of his heart; a perfect conformity to this law, through the greatest trials in life and death, constituted the mediatorial perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, our

representative and our patron; and that holiness in believers wherein they resemble Jesus Christ, consists in conformity to this same law. And herein it is distinguished from every counterfeit in the world. Let it once, therefore, be determined, what that moral character is, which God exhibits of himself in his law, and wherein its beauty lies, and what it is to love it, as the divine law originally required of mankind, and the nature of true holiness is ascertained beyond dispute.*

And in this view, it appears, with a striking evidence, that he who never beheld the glory of the divine law, never had any relish for holy beauty, or love to true holiness in his heart; and all his seeming love to Christ is nothing but exercise of selfish affections, occasioned by delusions, together with ignorance of Christ's true character. For the holiness of Christ as a mediator, was but a conformity to this original law; and if the law was not glorious, neither can there be any glory in a perfect conformity thereto. He, therefore, that is blind to the beauty of the divine law, is equally blind to the beauty of Christ, and equally blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and, indeed, to all holy beauty in the universe; whether existing in God, or Christ, or saints, or manifested in any part of the Holy Scripture, or in any part of the divine conduct which ever came to our knowledge.

2. Unless we look upon the vindictive justice of the Deity as a beauty in the divine character, no Christian grace can be exercised, or Christian comfort enjoyed; for there can be no Christian grace without love to God's real character, nor Christian comfort without esteeming God the supreme good. But vindictive justice is essential to that character of God which is presented to the Christian's view in the cross of Christ, as well as in the whole of the divine conduct, from the fall of angels, down to the day of judgment; and one bad property, entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will render any moral character devoid of beauty. And if there is no moral beauty in the divine character, he is neither worthy of supreme love, nor capable of being the supreme good to holy minds; and if there is no love to God's character, nor delight in him as the supreme good, there is no Christian grace, nor Christian comfort.

* Mr. Cudworth grants, that that kind of holiness I plead for, is that kind of holiness the divine law originally required — "the rightness of the original state of man." And so it is that kind of holiness which was in Jesus Christ, and which is in heaven. And I readily grant, that it is specifically different from that kind of holiness which he pleads for; as he maintains, "there is no loveliness in the divine nature to be conceived of, only in a belief that he loves me." The only question then is, whether there be two kinds of holiness, essentially different in their nature, and yet both of the right kind — a question easy to be answered.

If vindictive justice is not a beauty in the divine character, then it will follow, that there is no beauty in the divine nature, no beauty in the divine law, no beauty in the gospel of Christ, no beauty in any part of God's universal plan of government; as vindictive justice spreads through and is essential to the whole; and so, no ground or reason, upon the whole, for any one being in the universe to love God's character, or rejoice in his government, but all reason for the whole intellectual system to wish for an entire revolution in God's empire, to have every thing turned upside down, and put upon a new footing, and under another regulation.

To view the vindictive justice of the divine nature as a beauty in the divine character, is to see that all heaven ought forever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, for punishing sin according to its desert. (Rev. xix. 1, 6.) And unless it appears to us a beauty in the divine conduct thus to punish sin, we shall be at enmity against his whole plan of government, and can never understandingly, and from the heart, wish him well, or wish any of his subjects to pay him honor, unless we go on this stupid maxim, "If I am safe, I care not what becomes of others." And even this is to give up the honor of the Deity, as well as the welfare of our fellow-creatures; and in deed and in truth "to wish well to none but ourselves." And this is really, in one word, the life, and heart, and soul of all the religious joys any experience, who are blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and enemies to his law and government.

3. Divine truths spiritually known, that is, seen in their divine glory, beget and excite all those holy affections which constitute the Christian character, so that the whole system of divine truths held forth to view, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, making up one harmonious, consistent, beautiful whole, hath influence, in this affair, to beget and excite all those holy affections which form the character of a new man in Christ Jesus; and which lay a sure foundation for that holy and divine life which agrees with the whole tenor of the Bible, and is peculiar to the true followers of the Lamb.

It is granted, that this whole system of truths, ever so clearly seen, by a mind of an ill taste, and to which the whole appears very disagreeable and odious, will excite dislike and hatred; as when, seventeen hundred years ago, this whole system of truths were exemplified in the character of Jesus Christ, before the eyes of the wicked Jews, who, the more they knew of him, the more they hated him. "They have both seen and hated both

me and my Father." So the fallen angels, the more they know of the truths contained in the Bible, the more they hate them. And the same may be said of all the children of disobedience, who are left of God to their own hearts' lusts, and are under the power of the prince of the air, led captive by him at his will. For the carnal mind, being at enmity against God, is, of course, equally at enmity against that whole system of truth in which his true character is exhibited. And it is this which renders the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary in order that divine truths may be seen in such a light as to beget and excite all holy affections. The regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit are not necessary to make false schemes of religion seem lovely to a carnal heart, because such schemes are calculated for it, and in their own nature are adapted to suit carnal hearts. And were the Scripture system of sentiments as agreeable to a carnal heart as the system of sentiments contained in false schemes, it might appear agreeable and lovely, and excite answerable affections, without such influences; and so the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit might have been left out of the Bible, just as it is out of all false schemes. But being what it is, except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The gospel will be hid from him; for the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God. Did the sum and substance of the gospel consist in a revelation that there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, or that my sins in particular are forgiven, I might without the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, merely from self-love, be ravished with this. Or did the sum and substance of the gospel consist in a revelation, that such a civil, sober, honest life will entitle me to heaven, as my present comfort and worldly interest naturally excites me to, I might be pleased with the gospel revelation, without any influences from above at all. And the like may be said in all similar cases.

The Scripture system of divine truths being one harmonious, consistent whole, the true, divine beauty of no particular truth can be seen by a mind at enmity against any part of the whole system; the nature of every particular divine truth being the same, exactly the same, as the nature of the whole. And for this reason, it is as easy to discern the beauty of one particular truth, of which the mind has a clear conception, as of another; one being, when rightly understood, no more contrary to a carnal heart than another. For instance, the true beauty of divine goodness, rightly understood, is as remote from the sight of a wicked man, as the true beauty of vindictive justice;

and the reason it seems otherwise to many wicked men, is because their notion of God's goodness, and of God's justice, are not according to truth; for in God these two perfections are perfectly harmonious. God's severity against sin harmonizes with his goodness; and his goodness harmonizes with his severity against sin; for God's nature is in perfect harmony with itself. But wicked men are very apt to view the matter in a different light; and so, while they hate one perfection, they imagine they love another. Or, to allude to the Manichean scheme, while they hate the God of the Old Testament, they love the God of the New; or, to express the same thing in modern language, while they hate God out of Christ, they love God in Christ. But all this is wholly owing to their mistaking the true nature of things. He who really loves any one of the divine perfections on the account of its real loveliness, cannot fail to love them all, and he who is blind to the beauty of one, is equally blind to the beauty of all; for, in strict truth, all the moral perfections of God are really but one, as was before observed, although differently denominated, from their different exercises toward various objects. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Perfect in beauty, without a blemish. (Deut. xxxii. 4. Isai. vi. 3.)

Moreover, let it be observed and carefully attended to, that all divine truths in general, and without any one exception, are suited to beget and excite holy affections in divinely enlightened souls. There is not one truth in the whole Scripture scheme, but what is a doctrine according to godliness, (1 Tim. vi. 3;) and all jointly unite their influence to form the character of the godly man. "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Is God represented in Scripture as the Creator and Lord of all things? "O, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker," is the effect. (Ps. xcv. 6.) Is God represented as the Governor of the world, and his government, as being like himself, absolutely perfect? "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof," is the effect. (Ps. xcvii. 1.) Is God represented as the supreme good? "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee," is the effect. (Ps. lxxiii. 25.) Is God's law represented as holy, just, and good, a perfect law? "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: O, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day," is the effect. (Ps. xix. 8; cxix. 97.) And doth the divine law threaten eternal damnation for the least defect? And is it represented as

glorious in this view? (Gal. iii. 10. 2 Cor. 3, 7, 9.) — Thou art righteous when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest; our mouth is stopped, and we stand guilty before God; and I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God, is the effect. (Rom. iii. 4, 19. Gal. ii. 19.) Is there no other name but Christ's given under heaven whereby men can be saved? To rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, is the effect. (Phil. iii. 3.) Is it said, Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect? The effect is, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth toward those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) The same might be said of every divine truth in the whole Scripture system; for they are all of them doctrines according to godliness, and therefore we may easily, and with the greatest certainty, answer this question, — "Are men regenerated by the law, or by the gospel? If by regenerated is meant enabled to see the holy beauty of divine truths, we are regenerated neither by the law nor by the gospel, nor by any external means or instructions whatsoever; but by the immediate influences of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. xi. 25. John vi. 45. 2 Cor. iv. 6.) If by regenerated is meant holy affections being begotten and excited in the heart, in this sense we are regenerated by the law, and regenerated by the gospel, and regenerated by every divine truth in general; agreeable to that of our blessed Savior. (John xvii.) "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;" for the divine law is God's word, as much as the gospel. Every divine truth is the word of God. To say that there are some particular divine truths, which, although known, do not beget and excite in us holy affections answerable to their nature, is to say that there are some divine truths which we do not love; which is to say that we are hypocrites.

Objection. But does not St. Paul say, "I have begotten you through the gospel"?

Answer. Very true. And does not David say, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"? Only understand these texts in a consistency with each other, and you may be a consistent Christian. But if the character of God, as exhibited in the law, appears odious to you, and excites hatred and heart-risings; while the character of God, which you imagine to be exhibited in the gospel, appears lovely, and excites love and joy; you are not a Christian; you are a Manichean; you hate the God of the Old Testament, and love the God of the New; and so you have two Gods, of characters essentially

different. But St. Paul's gospel was built on this, as a fundamental maxim, that God's character, as exhibited in the law, was perfect in beauty, without a blemish. For, to do honor to this character, according to St. Paul, the Son of God became incarnate, and died on the cross, even to declare his Father's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer. St. Paul's gospel comprised the whole system of divine truths, in their proper arrangement, in perfect harmony. To be begotten by his gospel, is to have holy affections answerable to that whole system excited in us; and so, to become not Manicheans, but consistent Christians; obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which he delivered.

And even reason teaches that it must be so; for, if divinely enlightened souls have a relish for holy beauty, for such beauty as there is in God's real character, then every divine truth, as it exhibits his real character, will, if it comes into our view, appear beautiful; and will accordingly beget and excite holy affections answerable to its nature. But the divine law gives a very bright exhibition of God's real character, in its precepts, promises, and threatenings, as they are holy, just, and good, a transcript of the holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, the very image of his heart. The divine law, therefore, is suited, in its own nature, to excite holy affections in the divinely enlightened soul, as well as the cross of Christ. And in fact it does so, from the very moment his eyes begin to be opened at conversion, until they are perfectly opened in heaven. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." (Ps. xix. 7, 10.)

Obj. "But what occasion was there then for the death of Christ?"

Ans. 1. Absolutely none at all, under a notion the law was too severe, a bad, an unamiable law, and we the abused, injured party, that by his death he might purchase for us the relief which was our due, and so pacify our imbittered, angry minds, which had been exasperated against the Deity, the Lawgiver, and bring us to have a good thought of God, as being "altogether made up of love to us;" and in this view to be reconciled to him, against whom, viewed as exhibited in his holy law, "we are full of hatred and heart-risings, in spite of our hearts." To believe the Son of God died for this purpose, to view his death in this light, and to grow devout in such a view, is as bad as downright infidelity; and such a religion,

resulting from these blasphemous views, must be infinitely provoking to the Deity. No American pagan, no African Hottentot, ever espoused a scheme of religion more absurd in itself, or more impious in its nature. "What occasion was there then for the death of Christ?"

2. "What occasion!" — a surprisingly stupid question! When, as the beauty of the divine law, and the transcendent beauty and glory of the divine character as exhibited in the law, was the occasion, the great occasion, the only occasion, of the death of an incarnate God, in the room of a God-despising, God-hating world, that thereby he might vindicate the divine character, declare it to be right, and give a public proof, the greatest which could have been given, that the law was holy, just, and good, to the end that, consistent with the honor of his character and government, and to the glory of his grace, God might have mercy on whom he will have mercy, open the eyes of the elect, and bring them to repent and return to God through Jesus Christ, and in his name, and simply on his account, pardon and save them with an everlasting salvation. And besides, this very view of the divine law is the very thing which leads the enlightened soul to see its need of Christ's atonement; for no man can see his need of the atonement of Christ to do honor to the divine law, unless he sees that which renders it needful: but the excellency and honorableness of the divine law, which we had dishonored, was the only thing which rendered the atonement of Christ needful, in order to our salvation. If the law had not been a glorious law, and worthy of this honor, there had been no need, no occasion for the death of Christ in order to our salvation, as has been before proved. But to return: —

All holy affections, I say, are begotten and excited by the truth. On the other hand, in all false schemes of religion, their love and joy, and all their devout affections, in which a carnal heart is so much pleased, are begotten and excited by a lie; a lie invented to please a carnal heart. I say, in all false schemes of religion. And this is the reason that false schemes of religion are adhered to by deluded sinners with such an invincible obstinacy. They suit their carnal hearts; but they hate the truth. And therefore, in the apostolic age, while the apostles were yet alive, with all their inspiration, their miracles, their zeal, their tears, they could not help the matter; but in spite of all they could do, it in fact was, as St. Paul told Timothy, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. iii. 13.)

Such is the nature of mankind, and such the nature of our

holy religion, that nothing can be done to purpose in propagating true Christianity, without divine influences from above. The experiment has been made, and thoroughly made. Our blessed Savior preached at Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and spake as never man spake, and wrought many miracles before their eyes; but not so much as one of his hearers was brought to repentance by all his preaching and miracles, those only excepted, to whom God by his Spirit internally revealed the truth in its glory; yea, our Savior had no expectation to make converts by the force of preaching and miracles. He even laid it down for a maxim, that "no man can come to the Son but whom the Father draws." Without divine teaching, he knew that all external instruction would be ineffectual. But he always laid all the blame at the sinner's door. (Matt. xi. 20; xxii. 7. John vi. 44; xv. 22.)

So likewise the apostle Paul, of mere men the best preacher that ever lived, let him preach in the demonstration of the spirit and power, let him travail in birth for his hearers, and reason out of the Scriptures, and add miracles to his arguments, it was all the same; the Jews were provoked, and the Gentiles laughed; Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the one, and foolishness to the other. Nor did he ever make one sincere convert to Christianity in his life, merely by the force of external means; nay, after long experience, he publicly declared to the world, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Meanwhile the false teachers, who hated St. Paul, could make converts thick and fast, sincere converts to their false schemes among graceless professors, whose hearts, like tinder, stood ready to catch the false fire which they communicated. A carnal heart may love a false gospel. Among the great variety of false schemes, perhaps there is no carnal heart but may find some one to his mind. If not, he can invent one of his own exactly to suit his state. But no unregenerate man will love the truth; neither arguments nor miracles will bring him to it.

3. What has been said, may lead us to see what St. Paul means by the "calling," the "holy calling," the "heavenly calling," the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus," which he speaks of as common to all true saints, and peculiar to them alone. (1 Cor. i. 26. 2 Tim. i. 9. Heb. iii. 1. Phil. iii. 14.) Speaking of this calling, in Rom. viii. 28, he says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are *called* according to his purpose." And again, ver. 30: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also *called;* and

whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." And in 1 Cor. i. 23, 24: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are *called*, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Compared with ver. 18: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God." Compared with 1 Cor. ii. 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Ver. 15: "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." Compared with Rom. viii. 9: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Compared also with 2 Cor. iv. 3: "If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost," (ver. 4,) "in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Ver. 6: "For he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Compared with 1 Thess. i. 5: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Chap. ii. 13: "When ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Compared with Matt. xiii. 23: "He that received seed into good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit." Explained by 2 Cor. iii. 18: "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image."

When the apostles went forth, according to their Master's commission, to preach the gospel to every creature, they first declared, explained, and proved the great truths they had to deliver, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; then they called upon their hearers to repent and believe the gospel, — to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, — to repent and be converted, — to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, — to repent and turn to God, saying, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage."* Many who heard these

* Mr. Sandeman, imagining that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement for impenitent sinners, while such, would not have sinners called upon in the apostolic language, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" or in the language of our Savior, "Come, for all things are ready." Rather he would have preachers only endeavor to hold forth evidence to convince

things, who had this external call, made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; others mocked, and others were enraged. Thus many were called who did not come; for their eyes were blind that they could not see, and their ears were heavy that they could not hear. But as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. The elect obtained, and the rest were blinded; for whom he did predestinate, them he also called. And these all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, were changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

Whom he did predestinate, them also he called. He, that is, God. God himself called them; as it is written, "They shall be all taught of God." God himself revealed these things to them, (Matt. xi. 25;) opened the whole gospel way of life, in its divine glory, to their souls; and so gave them to see, that it was in truth, the word of God; in which view, the call of the gospel to repent and be converted, to turn to God through Jesus Christ, could not fail to be effectual. They beheld the gospel in its glory; they believed it to be true; every answerable affection was begotten in their hearts; they exercised repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; they loved the gospel; they loved the brethren; they loved all mankind; they were willing to part with all things, and even joyfully to lay down their lives for the truth. And whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. For nothing could ever separate them from the love of God, neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword; nay, in all these things they were more than conquerors, through Him who loved them. For the same mind was in them that was in Christ Jesus, and which carried him through all the labors of his life, and sufferings of his death; for the spirit of Christ dwelt in them, and they were able to do all things through Christ strengthening them; and thus, this was the true nature of Christ's holy religion in ancient times, in the apostolic age.

And thus we have considered the nature and glory of the

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sinners that there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, while such; a passive belief of which, he says, begets hope that I am pardoned; and this hope begets love to this doctrine of forgiveness, which thus relieves me; in which he says all godliness consists. And thus, as no act, exercise, or exertion of the human mind, is requisite in order to pardon, on his scheme, so the sinner is to be called to no act, exercise, or exertion whatsoever. And therefore he entirely excludes the call of the gospel. And as the external call of the gospel is left out of his scheme, so also is the internal call. And a passive belief that there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, and a hope that I am forgiven, supply the place of that effectual calling which was essential to the apostolic scheme. See his Letters on Theron, and to Mr. Pike.

gospel, the nature and consequences of spiritual blindness, and the nature and effects of divine illumination, as was proposed; and nothing now remains, but, in as few words as possible, to point out the fundamental principles on which all the reasonings in this Essay are built, and to show that we must come into this system of sentiments, or, turn infidels, or, with heretics of old, be inconsistent, and so self-condemned. And this shall be attempted in the Conclusion.

THE CONCLUSION.

THERE IS NO CONSISTENT MEDIUM BETWEEN ANCIENT APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND INFIDELITY.

If the judicious, candid reader will now stop, look back, and review, from beginning to end, the foregoing Essay, he will find the whole system of sentiments contained in it all naturally founded in, and resulting from, these three propositions: —

Proposition I. The great God, the Creator, Preserver, Lord, and Governor of the world, is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, the supreme good, infinitely worthy of supreme love, and honor, and universal obedience, from his creature man.

Prop. II. The divine law, which requires this of us, on pain of eternal death, is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and kept in honor in God's government.

Prop. III. The design of the mediatorial office and work of the Son of God incarnate, was to do honor to the divine law, and thereby open a way in which God might call, and sinners might come to him, and be received to favor, and entitled to eternal life, consistent with the honor of the divine government.

If these three propositions are true, then that whole scheme of sentiments which necessarily results from them must be equally true. To grant the propositions, and to deny their necessary consequences, is to be inconsistent. And he who denies the first proposition, that is, the existence of an absolutely perfect being, is an atheist; and to deny the second or the third, is to give up the Bible and be an infidel. Again, he who owns the first must grant the second, or be inconsistent; for, if God is such a being as the first asserts, the divine law

must be what the second affirms; and if the first and second are true, no man can doubt of the third.

But to reduce all to one point, and to be a little more particular: Christ was made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law; even from the curse of that law which curses every one that continueth not in all things. To deny that this law, from the curse of which Christ redeems us, requires perfect obedience, is expressly to contradict the word of God, which declares, that it requires us to *continue in all things*. To deny that this law comprises eternal ruin in its curse, is again expressly to contradict the word of God, which declares, that Christ delivers his people *from the wrath to come;* and over and over again declares, that the wrath to come will be *everlasting*, where the worm shall never die, and the fire never be quenched. It therefore appears to be a fact, as certain as that the New Testament is true, that the Son of God incarnate died on the cross, to bear the curse of that law which required perfect obedience of us, on pain of eternal misery. Now, that the Son of God, by his Father's appointment, should leave the world of glory, become incarnate, appear, and stand, and die in our room, to bear the curse which was by law due to us, is a fact the most wonderful and astonishing that ever reached human ears. And pray, what end had God the Father, or God the Son, in this infinitely surprising affair?

To say that God the Father gave his only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die, absolutely for no end at all, when sinners might have been saved in every respect as well without, is to say that Christ crucified is not the wisdom of God. And the doctrine of the cross must be owned to be, what its ancient adversaries affirmed, foolishness; which is to say, it is not from God.

If the Son of God incarnate was made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law for some end, it must have been either, first, because the law was bad, was too severe; and so he died to deliver us from the too great rigor and severity of the law, and to put us under a more equitable constitution; or, second, he died because the law was good, to do it honor, to declare God's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer. A third end, distinct from these two, cannot be mentioned.

If the Son of God left his Father's bosom, became incarnate, and died on the cross, because the law was bad, was too severe, etc., then it will follow, first, that in fact, the law was bad, and God the Father knew it, and God the Son knew it; second it had therefore been inconsistent with every perfection

of the divine nature to have held mankind bound by this law if Christ had never died; and therefore, thirdly, there was evi dently no need of his death in the case; unless we will say (Heaven forbid the blasphemy,) that God the Father was such a tyrant, that he could not do us justice, unless moved thereto by the blood of his own Son. To say which, is worse than downright infidelity.

If the Son of God left his Father's bosom, became incarnate, and died on the cross, because the law was good, to do it honor, etc., then also it will follow, 1st. That the law was in fact good, and worthy of all this honor; and God the Father knew it, and God the Son knew it; yea, and every child of Adam knows it, whose eyes are opened to see it as it is. 2d. And therefore all our ill thoughts of the divine law are groundless, yea, infinitely criminal. They are of the nature of blasphemy against God the Father and God the Son. And he who does not look upon this law as glorious, so infinitely honored by the Father and the Son, may justly be reputed an enemy to the Father and the Son, and in a peculiar manner an enemy to the cross of Christ. 3d. The divine glory of the atonement, primarily consists in its doing infinite honor to this glorious law, thereby asserting the rights of the Godhead, and condemning the sin of an apostate world. 4th. He, therefore, who is blind to the beauty of the divine nature, the excellency of the divine law, and the great evil of sin, must of necessity be blind to the glory of the atonement. 5th. He who does not view the divine law as glorious, worthy to be magnified and made honorable, can see no reason why it was honored on the cross of Christ; and so can see no wisdom, nor any other divine perfection, in the death of an incarnate God. 6th. Until the divine perfections exhibited to view on the cross, are seen, and seen in their glory, the gospel will not be believed with all the heart, nor will those holy affections which constitute the Christian character be produced by it. And if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost. 7th. It must be entirely owing to a supernatural, divine influence, that a mind alienated from, and at enmity against God's character and law, becomes struck with the beauty, and charmed with the glory, of each, as honored with the highest honors on the cross of Christ; and therefore, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

These, together with that whole system of sentiments, in close connection with these, contained in the preceding Essay, will follow, if Christ died because the law was good, to do it honor. To grant that Christ died for this end, and to deny the

consequences, is to be inconsistent. To deny that Christ died for this end, inevitably leads to infidelity. To say that Christ did not die because the law was good, to do it honor, is to say, there was no good reason for his death. To say he died because the law was bad, to get it repealed, is to offer a reason worse than none. And to say either, is to say that Christianity is not from God.

It remains, therefore, that there is no consistent medium between the ancient apostolic Christianity and downright infidelity. And accordingly, in strict truth, in the sight of God, who searcheth the heart, there are but two sorts of men in Christendom; and at the day of judgment it will appear so to all the world. Now, we are divided into a great variety of sects and parties; but then of all these sects and parties, there will appear to be but two sorts of men, believers and unbelievers. And then that most remarkable saying of Jesus Christ will take effect, and be fulfilled: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

No man on earth, or angel in heaven, has a right to vary or alter the true gospel of Jesus Christ, to accommodate it to the notions of the learned, or to the experiences of the unlearned. The Spirit of inspiration, which is in effect the same as if God himself had spoken with an audible voice from heaven, St. Paul, with the utmost solemnity, once and again, declared, as it were to the whole Christian world in a body, that if any man or angel shall preach any other gospel, "let him be accursed." And all who, with St. Paul, sincerely love the gospel of Christ, as it is, must therefore stand ready from the heart to say, Amen. For, as the gospel is one harmonious, connected whole, so he who alters it in any single point, to be consistent, must alter the whole; that is, must give up that whole system of truths, and substitute in its room a whole system of lies, a system subversive of, and directly contrary to, the whole gospel of Christ. For instance, he who denies the character of the Father, must deny the character and office of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For if the Father is not in himself infinitely worthy of our supreme love, previous to the consideration of our being pardoned, the divine law, which requires this, previous to that consideration, was not good; the death of Christ then, to do it honor, was needless; and the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit to bring us to view God in this light, there was no occasion for; if there is no amiableness in the divine nature previous to the consideration of his being my reconciled friend. And if my want of love,

and all my disaffection to the divine character, arises simply from considering him as my enemy, let him but declare himself my friend, and I shall love him with that kind of love which alone is his due; for it is natural to those who are born of the flesh, to love a friend and benefactor; for sinners love those that love them. And if my disaffection to the Deity results only from his being my enemy, then, as the breach began on his side, so it belongs to him to retract first; and if he loves me, I shall love him. No mediator or sanctifier is needed in the case; so the whole gospel is overthrown. The sinner is justified; God and his law condemned. The same may be said of every false scheme of religion. He who denies one single truth, let him be consistent, and he must deny the whole: and he who believes one error, let him be consistent, and he must believe a whole system of lies. And it was in this view that St. Paul pronounced the man or angel accursed, who should preach another gospel; because, if his other gospel was true, "Christ is dead in vain," and the whole of Christianity is overthrown. (Gal. ii. 21.) And as this was the case with the false scheme which St. Paul then opposed, so it is equally true as to every false scheme which has been advanced since; for, as it is enmity to the true gospel, which is contrary to every vicious bias in the human heart, that is the source of every false gospel, which is adapted to justify our corruptions, (John iii. 19—21,) so, of course, every false gospel is in its own nature contrary to and subversive of the true. But he who hates the true gospel of Christ so entirely, that he would overthrow the whole of it, were he able, as he is a thorough enemy to God and to his Son; so St. Paul's sentence against him, "Let him be accursed," is not more severe than that of his Master, "He that believeth not shall be damned"—a sentence, which, when it comes to be put in execution at the day of judgment, will meet with universal approbation and applause from all holy beings in the universe. As this is the most important subject in the world, and as we are all infinitely interested in it, so it demands the most serious consideration, and impartial and strict examination of all the professors of Christianity. He, therefore, that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

THAT THERE IS BUT

ONE COVENANT,

WHEREOF

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER ARE SEALS;

NAMELY,

THE COVENANT OF GRACE,

PROVED FROM THE WORD OF GOD;

AND THE DOCTRINE OF AN

EXTERNAL GRACELESS COVENANT,

LATELY ADVANCED BY THE REV. MR. MOSES MATHER,

IN A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED

"THE VISIBLE CHURCH IN COVENANT WITH GOD," &c.

SHOWN TO BE AN UNSCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE.

BUT UNTO THE WICKED GOD SAITH, WHAT HAST THOU TO DO TO DECLARE MY STATUTES, OR THAT THOU SHOULDST TAKE MY COVENANT IN THY MOUTH?

Psalm i. 16.

PREFACE.

If we may judge of the sentiments of ministers in general, by the pieces lately published on this controversy, all are agreed in these three propositions, namely:—

I. There is but one covenant, a profession of a compliance with which is requisite to an admission into the visible church of Christ, in complete standing.

II. Those who really comply with this covenant have, in the sight of God, an equal right to baptism for their children, and to the Lord's supper for themselves.

III. All scruples to the contrary are groundless and unscriptural.

There is, therefore, but one single point which now needs to be settled, to decide the whole controversy, namely: With what covenant are we to profess a compliance, — the covenant of grace, or a graceless covenant?

And this point is of such a nature, that it seems necessary to settle it before we proceed to act at all in church affairs; in gathering a church, settling a minister, admitting members, or administering sealing ordinances. For until this is settled, we know not upon what covenant the church is to be formed, nor what covenant is to be professed by those who are to be admitted, nor what covenant is to be sealed by baptism and the Lord's supper, nor what covenant the minister is to preach up and hold out to public view, as the thing to be complied with by professors, and to be sealed by the sacraments. So that, if we mean to proceed like rational creatures in our church affairs, we must look this matter to the bottom, and come to a determination.

To say, that it is needless to determine this point, is the same thing as to say, that it is of no consequence whether our churches are founded on a right covenant, or on a wrong one; or whether God's seals are fixed to the covanant he designed, or to a covenant to which he never intended they should be affixed; which none will pretend to say; for, if it is of no consequence what covenant we profess, nor what covenant we seal, a right one or a wrong one, it is surely of no consequence whether we profess or seal any covenant at all; which to say, is to tear up by the roots all notion of a visible church in the world. But to set aside a visible church, as a needless thing, is to set aside Christianity, as an imposture. There must be Christian churches; there must be a public profession of some covenant or other; there must be sealing ordinances; these ordinances must be administered by the ministers of Christ to the proper subjects; it must be determined who they are; it must, therefore, be determined on what covenant churches are to be formed, and what covenant is to be preached up, professed, and sealed. It is a controversy, which no honest man, who means to have any thing to do in church affairs, can let alone, as a mere circumstantial point. Much less can those who are already in the ministry, or are about to settle in that work, consistently content themselves to proceed without any settled scheme at all; unless all they aim at is to live a quiet life, right or wrong; which is what none will profess to do.

Our churches were originally founded on a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, at least generally. And indeed, I know not of one church in New England, of our denomination, which is now otherwise founded, if we may judge of their foundation by the words of the covenant which is read to those who are admitted to full communion. So far as I know, the formulas in use express the chief things contained in the covenant of grace: "That they avouch the Lord to be their God and chief good, and give up themselves to him, through Jesus Christ, to live to him and seek his glory." And therefore, should we be convinced that the covenant of grace is not the covenant with which the church of

Christ ought to profess a compliance, there ought to be an alteration in our formulas. For, as they stand at present, they tend to lead all persons whose consciences are awake, to think they ought to be converted, before they make a profession of religion and join in full communion with the church. For such do not think it right to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when they know they have no grace; nor do they think it consistent with moral honesty, to give their consent to the covenant in a sense different from its plain and natural sense. There is a necessity, therefore, if the covenant of grace is not the covenant which ought to be entered into, to call our churches together, to point out to them plainly this fundamental error in their constitution, and to lead them to vote out the covenant of grace, and to vote in a graceless covenant, in order to open a wide and effectual door to let ungodly men, as such, into our churches. And in this method, may be adopted regularly the new scheme advanced by the Rev. Mr. Moses Mather, an ingenious writer, in his piece lately published, entitled "The Visible Church in Covenant with God," etc.

This author has offered this doctrine of an external graceless covenant to public consideration, as taught in the word of God, and as the only consistent plan on which the visible church can be founded, and infant baptism vindicated. He had no desire, it may be presumed, that his scheme should be received by our churches without examination. The strictest scrutiny cannot hurt the truth. The truth, like the sun, can bear to be looked upon, without any diminution of its lustre. A glowworm is in danger of losing its brightness, if the light of day shines around it. This may be the nature of error; but the truth itself, the more strictly it is examined, the more will it appear to be like the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day.

Our confession of faith, and plan of church discipline, have determined for "the covenant of grace," declaring that "sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace;" * and

* See Con. Faith, chap. 27.

for the necessity of a profession of a "cordial subjection to Jesus Christ." But these are not the word of God. Mr. Mather undertakes to prove his doctrine from the word of God. And we ought, with the utmost readiness, to give up all human composures, when found inconsistent with the word of God. He appeals to Scripture; we join in the appeal; and let him that readeth understand.

BETHLEM, *June* 15, 1796.

THE COVENANT.

SECTION I.

THE NATURE OF MR. M.'S EXTERNAL, GRACELESS COVENANT, ITS DIFFERENCE FROM THE COVENANT OF GRACE, AND A GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT.

By the covenant of grace, Mr. M. means that covenant with which every true believer complies in the exercise of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and which promises pardon and eternal life to all who comply with it. Or, to use his own words, "a sure promise of eternal life, to all such as with a true heart believe in Jesus Christ." And in this we are agreed. But he maintains, that this is not the covenant, a compliance with which is to be publicly professed by any of the followers of Christ, when they join in full communion with the church. It is a chief design of this piece to prove this point. And in this we differ.

By the external covenant, he means, not the covenant of grace, externally entered into by a public profession of a compliance with it, which is what some divines have meant by the phrase; but a covenant specifically different from the covenant of grace. It differs from it in three things. 1. The covenant of grace requires holiness, a holy faith, a holy repentance, a holy obedience: the external covenant requires no holiness at all. 2. The covenant of grace is complied with by none but the regenerate, in the exercise of holiness: the external covenant may be complied with by the unregenerate, by those that have no grace. 3. The covenant of grace promises eternal life: the external covenant promises no such thing; but leaves those who comply with it, and do no more, under the sentence of the divine law, to eternal death. This appears through the whole performance. We maintain that there is no such covenant; he endeavors to prove that this

is the only covenant, a compliance with which was professed by Abraham, by the Israelites in the wilderness, and by the apostolic converts, when they entered visibly into covenant with God, and became members of God's visible church; as will be plain to any one that reads his book. We affirm that a profession of a compliance with this covenant God never required of any man.

There is a covenant of grace, indeed, according to Mr. M., which promises eternal life to the true believer, to which this external covenant, he says, serves as means to the end. But a compliance with this covenant of grace never was required, and never was professed, in order to sealing ordinances, under the Old Testament or the New; for the seals were not designed primarily to be seals of the covenant of grace, but of a graceless covenant, with which graceless men may comply in the sight of God, while such. And so there is no need of a compliance with the covenant of grace, in order to a consistent attendance on sealing ordinances. As graceless men may comply with this graceless covenant, so they may consistently be active in sealing it; and so there is not the least need of our being born again, or the least occasion of a profession of godliness, or making any pretence of love to God or Christ, or to vital piety, in order to a regular admission into the church of Christ. We need not be saints in reality, or in profession; in the sight of God, or in the sight of men; no such thing is required, no such thing is pretended. For "the external covenant does not respect a gracious state of heart, as the qualification requisite to a person's entering into it." A church of Christ, therefore, is a congregation in which there is no visible profession made of real Christianity; that is, of friendship to Christ, or of Christian grace, or of any thing but what is consistent with a state of total enmity to God and Christ, and to all spiritual good. This is Mr. M.'s idea of a visible church; and any higher profession he thinks of very bad tendency.

If the least spark of grace is required in the external covenant, or if the least spark of grace is professed invisibly entering into it, then the man that knows he has no grace, but is dead in sin, cannot make a profession, and Mr. M.'s end is frustrated, which was to open a wide and effectual door for such as know themselves to be ungodly, to join in full communion with the church.

And if this external covenant does not require the least degree of grace or holiness, then it requires nothing but ungracious, unholy, sinful performance, — for Mr. M. will not

choose to say, that there is a system of religious volitions, affections, and actions, which are neither virtuous nor vicious; neither holy nor sinful; neither conformable to the holy nature and law of God, nor unconformable; for this would be to suppose that the divine law is not a universal rule of life. So that, although Abraham and all Abraham's spiritual seed, when they first comply with the covenant of grace, exercise real holiness, and live in the exercise of holiness through the course of their lives, agreeable to our Savior's character of them in Matt. vii. 24, and attend the means of grace in a holy manner, (Matt. xiii. 8,) and even hate and abhor that impenitent, self-righteous, sinful manner in which all the ungodly attend them, (Prov. xv. 8,) yet when they come to make a public profession, they are to covenant and promise to attend all means in no better manner than that in which impenitent, self-righteous sinners do. For they are publicly to profess and promise nothing but a compliance with the external covenant; and the external covenant requires nothing more. And having made this ungodly profession, and by covenant bound themselves to attend all means of grace in this manner, they set to it God's appointed seal; and this unholy covenant the most holy Christian is to renew and seal every time he comes to the table of the Lord till he dies; but how this can possibly be done with a good conscience, Mr. M. has not yet told us.*

Thus we have taken a brief and general view of Mr. M.'s scheme of an external, graceless covenant. I think I understand him right. But if any of his admirers should say this is not his scheme, but the external covenant requires real holiness, and the public profession is to be accordingly a profession of godliness, then those who know themselves to be unconverted, are as much shut out from full communion in the visible church on his scheme as on the scheme of our forefathers; which Dr. Increase Mather affirmed to be the scheme of Protestants in general, in opposition to Papists. "I do readily acknowledge," says he, "that as it is only a

* The external covenant is a graceless covenant, suited to the hearts of graceless men; therefore to be in heart conformed to the external covenant, is to have a heart destitute of grace. Every true convert therefore renounces the external covenant in his heart at the time of his conversion, and complies with the covenant of grace; nor can he ever go back to the external covenant in his heart without falling from grace. So that if Abraham was in the covenant of grace before, as Mr. M. says he was, then he fell from grace when he entered into the external covenant. And if, by sealing the external covenant, he obliged himself to conform to it as long as he lived, he did thereby bind himself to continue unconverted till death. But the covenant with Abraham was an everlasting covenant, (Gen. xvii. 7,) to which Abraham was obliged to conform in heart and life as long as he lived.

justifying faith which giveth right to baptism before God, so it is the profession, or visibility of this faith, that giveth right thereunto before the church. Some have maintained that a dogmatical historical faith, or faith of assent to the truth of the gospel, doth entitle to baptism; but the common Protestant doctrine against the Papists speaketh otherwise." *

But the question now before us is not, What was the doctrine of Protestants or Papists? but a question much more interesting, namely, What is the doctrine of the Bible, the only book we are obliged to believe and obey on pain of God's eternal wrath? And the question is, What is God's covenant, which is to be professed and sealed — a gracious, or an ungracious covenant? What was the Abrahamic covenant? and what the covenant into which the Israelites professed to enter in the wilderness? and what is that covenant revealed in the gospel, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals — a holy covenant, or an unholy one?

But before we enter on the subject, it may not be improper to observe, that Mr. M. has given up the grounds on which Mr. Jonathan Dickinson, and after him Mr. Peter Clark, vindicated infant baptism; namely, that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace.† And Mr. M. endeavors to lay a new foundation for infant baptism, perhaps never before laid by any writer on that subject; namely, an external, graceless covenant; and what the effect among common people will be, if they shall see Mr. M.'s external covenant proved to be a mere nonentity, cannot yet be known. But if any are shaken in their belief of infant baptism, when they find Mr. M.'s foundation give way under them, they ought to remember, that the defenders of infant baptism have not built their arguments on this foundation, but always on a supposition that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace.

Thus Mr. Bostwick, late minister of the Presbyterian church in New York, in his Vindication of Infant Baptism, (p. 19,) says, "The covenant made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, and the same for substance that is now in force under the gospel. This I look upon to be the grand turning-point on which the issue of the controversy very much depends; for if Abraham's covenant, which included his infant children, and gave them a right to circumcision, was not the covenant of

* Discourse concerning the subject of Baptism.

† See Mr. Clark's Defence of Infant Baptism, ch. iv., in which the covenant with Abraham is proved to be the covenant of grace; and Dr. Gill's objections, in his piece against Mr. Dickinson, some of them the same with Mr. Mather's, are answered.

grace, then I freely confess that the main ground on which we assert the right of infants to baptism, is taken away; and consequently, the principal arguments in support of the doctrine are overturned."

SECTION II.

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM WAS A HOLY COVENANT, AND COULD NOT BE REALLY COMPLIED WITH BUT IN THE EXERCISE OF REAL HOLINESS.

SHOULD a dispute arise concerning the contents of any covenant between two of our neighbors, what way would common sense teach all impartial men to advise them to take, in order to settle the controversy? Would they not say, "Come, neighbors, no more dispute about this matter; bring out the writing; let us read it, and see with our own eyes how the bond runs"?

Now, these are the contents of the covenant with Abraham, in Gen. xii., where it is first of all mentioned: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And was this a graceless covenant, or the very gospel of Christ? Hear what an inspired apostle saith: "And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." And in Gen. xii. 4, follows an account of Abraham's compliance: "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." He did not merely "endeavor," but he actually complied. And was this done in faith, or in a graceless manner? Take the answer from an inspired writer: "By *faith* Abraham, when he was called to go out .... obeyed." Just parallel to the conduct of Christ's true disciple, when he was on earth: "And he said unto him, Follow me, and he arose and followed him."

And this same covenant was renewed on God's part in Gen. xv. 5: "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." And in ver. 6, follows Abraham's compliance: "and he believed in the Lord." And the very next words determine that this was

not Mr. M.'s external covenant, in a compliance with which no man is justified, and that Abraham's faith was a true justifying, saving faith: "and he counted it to him for righteousness."

And in chap. xvii. this same covenant was renewed again with this additional declaration: "I am God Almighty," absolutely all-sufficient. For he had before said, (chap. xv.,) "I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward; which is something of a higher nature than what is promised by Mr. M.'s external covenant; yea, it is added, "to be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee." In consequence of which he was called "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" and what is implied in this we may learn from Heb. xi. 15: "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." Yea, all the great blessings of the gospel are summed up in one promise: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God." And this divine injunction was added at this season of renewing this covenant: "walk before me, and be thou perfect;" which implied a life of real holiness, and sincere devotedness to God.

Mr. M.'s external covenant requires no higher kind of faith than the devil has, and nothing but ungracious, unholy obedience, which those who are dead in sin may perform. But neither this faith nor this obedience were the faith and obedience of Abraham. Mr. M.'s covenant requires what James calls a dead faith, by which no man can be justified; but Abraham's was a living faith, by which he was justified, and by which all others will be justified who have it. And his obedience was a holy obedience, such as is peculiar to the friends of God. Mr. M.'s external covenant is adapted to the temper and state of the unconverted, requiring only such religious exercises as may take place in them. But Abraham was not in an unconverted state; and so Mr. M.'s external covenant was not adapted to the temper and state in which he was: if the reader will be at the pains to take his Bible and turn to Gen. xii. and read the whole history of Abraham's life, he will not find the least hint of more than one covenant with Abraham; nor was one unholy duty ever required at his hands; rather, on the contrary, these were the express words of God Almighty to him: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." If, therefore, we judge of the nature of the covenant with Abraham, as we do of all other written covenants, namely, by the contents of the written instrument, there is no room to doubt.

And now this covenant being thus made, and thus renewed from time to time, through the space of above twenty years, an external seal was at length by God appointed to it. For

circumcision was appointed as a token of this very covenant, which was made with Abraham before he was circumcised. For an inspired apostle has said it. Rom. iv. 9—11: "Cometh this blessedness" — namely, that spoken of in the foregoing verse, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" — "then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal, [not of Mr. M.'s external covenant, but] of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father [not of those graceless men, that enter into Mr. M.'s graceless covenant, but] of all them that believe; that righteousness might be imputed to them also;" that all who comply with that covenant, as Abraham did himself, might be justified and saved, as he was. From all which it is evident that that covenant with which Abraham visibly complied, when, in obedience to God's call, he separated himself and his family from the idolatrous world to worship the true God only, and to believe in, and wait for, the coming of the Messiah, whose day he saw, and was glad, was not Mr. M.'s external, graceless covnant, by which no man can be justified and saved, but the covenant of grace, which promises eternal life to those who comply with it; "for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and that circumcision was a seal of this very covenant; which were the points to be proved.

There is not one text in the New Testament where the nature of the covenant with Abraham is pointed out, but that it is spoken of as the covenant of grace; for it is always spoken of as the way, and as the only way, in which a sinner can be justified. Particularly read Rom. iv. and Gal. iii. and iv., and this will appear in the clearest light. For from the manner in which Abraham was justified, Paul illustrates and confirms the gospel way of justification. For he considers Abraham as the pattern, and teaches that all sinners are justified in the same way in which he was; and in this sense he is the father of many nations, as he is the father of all that believe. (Rom. iv. 16, 17.) "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Ver. 3: "Now it is not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Gal. iii. 7: "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, [who are true believers,] the same are the children of Abraham?" And

the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which are of faith, (that is, are true believers,) are blessed with faithful Abraham. (Ver. 8, 9.) But (ver. 10) all self-righteous sinners are under the curse; "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." But (ver. 13, 14.) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith." For it is the peculiar privilege of believers to have the spirit. Rom. viii. 9: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Gal. iv. 6, 7: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your heart, crying, Abba, Father. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." But (chap. iii. 26:) "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." Ver. 29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." For (ver. 16) "to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Therefore, if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

So that if we read the contents of the written instrument, as it is recorded in the Old Testament, or consider how the inspired writers of the New understood it, nothing can be plainer than that the covenant with Abraham, into which the believing Gentiles are received under the gospel dispensation, was the covenant of grace, even that covenant in which, and in which alone, justification and eternal life are to be expected. Nor can Mr. M. apply these texts to his external, graceless covenant, without perverting the word of God in a most shocking manner. Yea, if these texts do not speak of the covenant of grace by which alone sinners are justified, no such covenant can be found in the Bible. There was no other covenant revealed to Abraham; and Paul knew of no way of justification but this. We have as much evidence, then, that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, as we have that there ever was a covenant of grace existing since the world began. Now observe, —

1. From the nature of this covenant with Abraham we may learn the nature of God's visible church. For as a real compliance with this covenant renders us the children of Abraham indeed, so a visible compliance with it renders us visibly the

children of Abraham. And as this covenant is but one, so God's church is but one; according to that article in the Apostle's Creed, so called, "I believe in the holy catholic church." There is but one good olive-tree, according to St. Paul. (Rom. xi.) Were there two covenants, there would be two churches, two olive-trees, answerable to the nature of the two covenants. But the Bible knows of but one covenant with Abraham; and so God's church is compared to one good olive-tree; and graceless professors are compared to dry branches in this one good olive-tree. Whereas, on Mr. M.'s plan, the visible church is founded on a graceless covenant; this graceless covenant is the bond of union. So the olive-tree itself, root and branch, is dead and dry, wholly graceless; and appears to be so; for there is no pretence to any thing else. Yea, Mr. M. thinks it was God's design, that his real friends should keep hid, so as not to profess their friendship to him publicly before the world; and so that God should have, in this sense, no visible church in the world, not one open friend upon earth. But Abraham professed to be a friend to God, and was by God publicly owned as such before the world; for he is called the friend of God. (Jam. ii. 23.)

2. We may also learn that the seal of the covenant of grace may with propriety be applied to some infants. For all will allow that God is the proper judge of propriety in such a case; and all grant that God appointed circumcision to be applied to some infants; and therefore, if baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace, yet it may be applied to some infants; provided only they have the same right to baptism that the children of Abraham had to circumcision.

3. We may also hence learn the foundation of the right of believing Gentiles to baptism for their children. For "if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." For, "if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree." But from the very time that the practice of grafting in Gentile converts into the good olive took place, it had also been the custom, by divine appointment, to put the seal of the covenant upon the children, as well as upon the father.* (Exod. xii. 48.)

* "If you consider the covenant of grace, which was made with Abraham, and by God's express command to be sealed to infants, you will there find a sufficient Scripture institution for infant baptism. You will find this covenant in Gen. xvii. 2—10. Here we are taught as plainly as words can teach us, that this covenant was made with Abraham, as he was the father of many nations,

4. It is self-evident that those who kn
grace, cannot understandingly and hones
ance with the covenant of grace. But t
is that covenant upon which God's visib
Nor is it lawful to apply the seals of this c
covenant, of a nature specifically different

5. For any church to lay aside the co
introduce a graceless covenant in its roo
unchurch themselves; that is, so far as t
render themselves not a visible church of C
visibly of a nature essentially different;
covenants are.

But it is time to attend to the grand o
doctrine, that the covenant with Abraham
of grace; taken, as Mr. M. says, "from t
Other objections, of a more general nature,
Sect. VII. It may be thus summed up: —

Objection. That the covenant with A
Gen. xvii., was not the covenant of grace,
from this, that he was in the covenant of
from the covenant itself, which was merely
in the flesh;" for the circumcision of the fl
nant; as it is written, "This is my covena
cision is not the covenant of grace, but a m
which may be put upon a man that has no
cumcision cannot be the covenant of grace; fo
circumcise a child, this covenant might be br
no falling from grace. Therefore circum
covenant of grace, but an external covenant
nature.*

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the father of the Gentiles as well as the Jews; that this
nant of grace, an everlasting covenant; that this covenant
infants. From all which it undoubtedly follows, that thi
with us the seed of Abraham, as well as with the Jews;
believers in our nations as well as theirs." — *President Di*
of Infant Baptism.

And this learned writer adds, "That this covenant was
is abundantly evident from the tenor of the covenant itself
show. And, "This then is the sum of the matter: Circum
seal of the covenant of grace; baptism is a token or seal
grace: it therefore follows."

* The reasons which induce me to think that Mr. M.
these: 1. Because, speaking of the external covenant, in or
is not the covenant of grace, and to show the difference, he s
any one enters into this covenant, is an external mark in
circumcision; but that by which any one enters into the c
the circumcision of the heart." By entering into covenant,
ing with it; for this is his argument: namely, As, in the
heart, the covenant of grace is complied with, so, in the circu

Answer. This is the foundation of Mr. M.'s scheme. And perhaps there never was a fabric built on a more sandy foundation; for he has mistaken the external seal of the covenant for the covenant itself. Because it is said, "This is my covenant," he at once concludes that circumcision is the very covenant itself; just as the Papists do in the doctrine of transubstantiation: because it is said, "this is my body, they at once conclude that the bread is the very body of Christ itself; whereas nothing can be plainer, than that the contents of God's covenant had been stated, and Abraham had complied with them, above twenty years before the institution of circumcision. And this very covenant, which had, from time to time, been renewed, is again renewed in Gen. xvii.; and an external seal is appointed to it. So that nothing hinders but that the covenant with Abraham may be what the Scriptures teach it to be, and what the Christian world have always thought it to be; namely, the covenant of grace; and circumcision may still be, what it has been always thought to be; namely, an external seal of the covenant of grace, which God made with Abraham.* And if

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the external covenant is complied with: therefore they are not one and the same covenant, but two, of a nature as different as these two kinds of circumcisions. 2. He says, that circumcision was a compliance with the external covenant. These are his words: "This covenant appears to be an external covenant, in that, although a person was in a state of grace, and was consequently included in the covenant of grace, yet this covenant remained to be complied with. Abraham was a true believer before, yet he must needs be circumcised." Which implies, that circumcision itself was a compliance with the external covenant. And on this hypothesis, he teaches, that baptism which comes in the room of circumcision, gives a right to all the blessings of the external covenant; makes us "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Even baptism alone, which it could not be supposed to do, were it not supposed to be the only condition of the blessings, that is, the only thing required in the external covenant, necessary to give us a title to its blessings. So that we have beyond doubt Mr. M.'s true meaning in the objection above, however inconsistent it is with some other things in this book; of which hereafter, Sect. VIII.

* And if circumcision was a seal of the covenant of grace, then every circumcised Israelite was under covenant bonds in all things to comply with and live up to the covenant of grace, as administered under that dispensation; particularly, he was under covenant bonds to separate himself and his household from the idolatrous world, and to love and worship the true God, and to believe in and wait for the promised Messiah, and to look for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. And he was under covenant bonds in these views, and with this temper, to circumcise his children, and bind them in all things to comply with and live up to the covenant of grace; and to neglect this was to be guilty of the breach of the Abrahamic covenant. And those who persisted in this neglect proved themselves to be not the genuine children of Abraham, but rather apostates from the God of their father; and as such they deserved to be cut off, according to Gen. xvii. 14; for Abraham acted sincerely and from the heart in complying with God's call to leave his native country, and in separating himself and his household from the idolatrous world, to worship and serve the true God, to believe in and wait for the promised Messiah, looking upon the land of Canaan as a type of heaven, which was indeed the country for which he sought; for this world was not his home; but he was a pilgrim and stranger on earth.

God's covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and if the same covenant which took place then, continues under the gospel dispensation, as Mr. M. asserts, then the dispute is at an end. Mr. M.'s scheme is demolished. However, because he means to gather strength from the Sinai covenant, let us proceed to consider that.

Note.—If the Abrahamic covenant was in no sense any part of the Sinai covenant, then circumcision was in no sense a seal of the Sinai covenant; and in this view the Sinai covenant ought to be entirely left out of the dispute; because we are all agreed, that the gospel covenant is the same for substance with the Abrahamic. However, let us see what evidence there is that the Sinai covenant was a holy covenant, which could not be really complied with, but in the exercise of real holiness.

And all the genuine children of Abraham are of the same spirit; for they do the works of Abraham. All his seed, therefore, according to the flesh, by being circumcised on the eighth day, were bound by God to be of the same spirit. And when they became adult, and children were born to them, they were bound in the same spirit to circumcise their children. If they neglected to circumcise their children in this spirit, they broke God's covenant. If they performed the external rite of circumcising their children, they did, by that action, practically profess to be of this spirit; for this was the import of the action. If their hearts were answerable to their external conduct, then they were Abraham's children indeed; and heirs, not only of earthly, but also of the heavenly Canaan. If they had no love to the God of Abraham, or faith in the promised Messiah, they were pagans at heart; or, in other words, they were uncircumcised in heart; and will be considered and treated accordingly, as soon as ever they shall come to stand before the bar of God, as searcher of hearts, in the invisible world. "For he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart." "But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." (Rom. ii. 25—29.) However, in this present world, God conducted toward them not as the searcher of hearts, but in the character of a visible head; and therefore dealt with them according to visible appearances, trusting their profession, saying, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie." And in this character he considered them as covenant-breakers, not according to what they were in heart secretly, but according to what they appeared to be in external conduct. These hints may serve to show the true import of Gen. xvii. 14, and the meaning of Exod. iv. 24—26.

There have been four dispensations of the covenant of grace—the Adamic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and the Christian. Repentance toward God, and faith in the promised seed, and holiness of heart and life, have been equally necessary in all times, and under all dispensations; but rites and ceremonies have been varied. Offering sacrifice was always practised from the days of Adam, but circumcision was appointed to the family of Abraham. Melchizedek and Lot were under the Adamic dispensation; therefore they practised sacrificing, but not circumcision. But there never was a covenant made by God adapted to the temper and conduct of impenitent, self-righteous sinners, requiring men to feel and act as they do, in their religious exercises and performances; but from the early days of Cain to the present period, God has ever refused to smell a sweet savor in such sacrifices. The first persecution and the first martyr was relative to this point. (Gen. iv. 3—8.)

SECTION III.

THE COVENANT WITH THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS WAS A HOLY COVENANT, AND COULD NOT BE REALLY COMPLIED WITH, BUT IN THE EXERCISE OF REAL HOLINESS.

THE whole law of Moses, which was written in a book, comprises at large all the contents of the covenant with the Israelites in the wilderness. This book, therefore, was called The Book of the Covenant; and the little chest in which it was put, from the special use to which it was appropriated, was called the Ark of the Covenant. (Deut. xxxi. 9, 25, 26.) A brief summary of this law was written on two tables of stone, (Deut. iv. 13;) which two tables of stone were, therefore, called the Tables of the Covenant, (Deut. ix. 9, 10, 11, 15;) and were also put into the ark of the covenant. (Deut. x. 4, 5.) So that we may be as certain of the nature of that covenant, as we can be of the meaning of the Mosiac law.

The Israelites in the wilderness professed a compliance with this covenant, and with no other, as is beyond dispute certain from Exod. xix. 8; xxiv. 3. Deut. v. 1—6; xxvi. 16—18; xxviii. 1. 15, 58; xxix. 9—13, compared with chap. xxx. 10—16. And as soon as they should pass over Jordan, they were expressly commanded to set up great stones, and plaster them with plaster, and write upon them all the words of this law; and to build an altar, and offer sacrifice; and half the tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal, and half on Mount Gerizim; and the Levites were to say unto all the men of Israel, with a loud voice, "Cursed be the man," etc., that breaks this and that law, twelve times successively, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel; and finally, to sum up all in one word, "Cursed be the man that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them; and all the people shall say, Amen." (Deut. xxvii.) And this most solemn and affecting affair was accordingly attended, soon after they had passed over Jordan. (Josh. viii. 30—35.) So that, by their own act and deed, they did, in the most public and explicit manner, declare their hearty approbation of, and acquiescence in, not Mr. M.'s external covenant, but the perfect law of God, in all its strictness, and with all its curses, as holy, just, and good. Nor was there, according to that constitution, any hope of pardon in case of transgression, but by the blood of atonement; nor was there any pardon to be obtained in this way until they repented; until their uncircumcised hearts were humbled, even so deeply

humbled as to accept the punishment of their iniquity. (Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. Neh. ix. Dan. ix.) Then they were to pray for pardon, looking towards God's holy dwelling-place, where the covenant was laid up in the ark, and covered with a lid all made of pure gold, to keep the law in honor, which was a type of Christ, whose office it is to magnify the law, and make it honorable, and to open a way for grace to reign. That lid was called the mercy-seat, or rather, as critics say, it ought to have been translated, *the propitiatory;* for it was a shadow of Christ, the great propitiatory; and moreover, to complete the shadow, without shedding of blood there was no remission. Just thus stands the account in the sacred writings.

This cordial approbation of their law in all its extent, and with all its curses; and this praying for pardon, looking towards God's holy dwelling-place, offering sacrifices, etc., was, for substance, the same with what the apostle Paul meant by "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," which was the sum of that gospel he used to preach to the Jew and also to the Greek. For in repentance toward God, the divine law is heartily acquiesced in, and loved as holy, just, and good; and the whole blame of every transgression is taken to ourselves; with a disposition to say unto God, "Thou art just when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." And in faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, we look only to free grace through him for pardon and eternal life; so that the covenant of grace, in a legal dress, was the very covenant into which they professed to enter. So Paul understood it, (Rom. x. 6—10, compared with Deut. xxx. 11—14;) of which more presently.

But a heart wholly dead in sin is in a state of total contrariety to the divine law, and to the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; or, in the language of Scripture, it is "enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." So that there is not the least degree of real compliance with this holy covenant in one who is entirely destitute of holiness; and so no degree of real compliance can be understandingly and honestly professed. But if the truth was known, and the truth was spoken by graceless sinners, they would all as one man declare, agreeable to our confession of faith, "We are utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil;" for this is the very truth of the case, as Mr. M. himself professes to believe.

And where, now, is there the least appearance of Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant in the Old Testament? The contents of Abraham's covenant are justifying faith;—he "believed

God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" and gospel obedience:—"walk before me, and be thou perfect;" —and he was called the friend of God. (James ii. 23.) The contents of the covenant at Sinai is the holy law of God as the rule of life, and the blood of atonement as the foundation of hope. And where is this unholy covenant? But to be more particular in the confutation of this notion:—

1. It is readily granted, that a notion of the Sinai covenant, somewhat like this, was once espoused by the most respectable sect in the Jewish church; I mean the Pharisees. They understood the Mosaic law in this very sense, and in no other. And in this they were more consistent than Mr. Mather; for he understands the Mosaic law in this very sense, and in a sense diametrically opposite to it, at the same time; for he believes the Mosaic law requires perfect holiness, even that every law which was itself the rule of duty in that covenant which was externally entered into; and yet he believes that the covenant externally entered into did require no holiness at all; but might be really complied with in the sight of God, by a graceless man, dead in sin. But the Pharisees were more consistent.* They believed that the Sinai covenant required nothing more in religion than they performed; for, as touching the righteousness of the law, they were blameless in their own eyes; for they lived up to its demands in their sense of it. "All these have I kept from my youth up," said one of them; and it was the spirit of the whole party to say to God, as the elder brother did to his father, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment;" for they were, in their own eyes, righteous men, who needed no repentance; and this encouraged them to pray to God, and to hope for his approbation; for they could say, as one of them did, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" for without the law sin was dead; and so they were alive without the law. And in this view of themselves, they were bold to claim a covenant relation to God: "we have one father, even God." And they gloried much in having Abraham to their father; and were vexed at John Baptist and Jesus Christ for not admitting their claims to be well-grounded; and for representing them to be not the children of Abraham, nor the children of God, but

* For the divine law to require contrary and inconsistent volitions, is to be a self-contradictory and inconsistent law. (Matt. vi. 24.) But sinful and holy volitions are contrary and inconsistent. (John iii. 6. Rom. viii. 7. Gal. v. 17.)

For God to make two laws, one requiring none but holy volitions, the other none but sinful volitions, is to make two laws, contradictory and inconsistent; both of which cannot be in force at the same time; yea, rather, neither of which can be in force at all, as they mutually destroy each other.

the children of the devil, a generation of vipers. This was shocking treatment, indeed, of those who were not only in covenant with God, as they thought, but who, as they understood it, had lived up to it too; and Mr. M. may be challenged to point out any essential difference between their notion of what the law of Moses required, and his notion of what his external covenant requires; for both agree in this, that a man may live up to the one, and to the other, without really embracing Christianity. They lived up to the law in their sense of it, and openly rejected Christ; and one may live up to Mr. M.'s external covenant, and reject Christ in his heart, as he allows; and were it the fashion, he who rejects Christ in his heart, might do it in open profession.* Nay, how many professors are there, who, in their consciences, view the divine law very much in the same light that the Pharisees did! They are sensible it forbids open, gross, and, what the world calls, scandalous sins; such as stealing, etc. Their consciences will smite them if they are guilty of any such gross sins; but their consciences never smote them in their lives for not being converted for impenitence, for unbelief, for not loving God and Christ above all things; but they are agreed to a man to justify themselves in these sins, for they say, "We do as well as we can." And these are the men who claim church privileges with the greatest boldness, and have the highest notions of their being in covenant with God, and having a right to covenant blessings. If it should ever happen to these men, that their consciences should be so awakened, as to see that a state

* In the dark days of Popery there were no professed infidels among Christians. Since the reformation, light and knowledge are greatly increased, and infidelity is become very fashionable in Great Britain. However, there are thousands of professed Christians yet remaining in the visible church, who believe the Bible to be the word of God, not because they understand and believe that scheme of religion which in fact is contained in the Bible, but because they think it contains their own schemes. Thus Pelagians believe the Bible to be the word of God, as supposing it contains a system of Pelagianism; and Socinians, as supposing it contains a system of Socinianism; and Arminians, Neonomians, and Antinomians do the like; while they allow themselves to disbelieve, and hate, and oppose that very system of doctrines and practice which in fact it does contain. In this view there may be not a few professed Christians, who are infidels in reality; that is, who really disbelieve that scheme of religion which is contained in the Bible, while they profess to believe the Bible to be the word of God. Thus it was among the Jews. (John v. 46, 47. Matt. xxiii. 29—36.) Should light still increase, and these men find out that their various schemes are not contained in the Bible, if left to their own hearts, they would universally prefer infidelity to Christianity; and in this case, there would be nothing to prevent their throwing off the profession of Christianity but their worldly interest. For it is plain fact, that the external evidences of Christianity, when fresh, and before the eyes of the Pharisees, were not sufficient to conquer their aversion to it, so as to prevent their rejecting of it; and human nature is the same that it was seventeen hundred years ago.

and course of enmity against God and his law, and of rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, is as great a sin, in the sight of the Holy One of Israel, as stealing, considered as a crime committed against our neighbor, their consciences would soon tell them, that the one disqualified them, in the sight of God, for entering into covenant with God, as much as the other. But if we tell men, that a state and course of enmity against God and his law, and of rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, does not, in the sight of God, disqualify them to enter into covenant with God, though stealing does, it will have, according to Mr. M.'s reasoning, "a direct tendency to prevent their minds being impressed with a sense of the heinous nature of such sins, and of God's displeasure against them; but it is highly expedient they should be so dealt with as to awaken in their minds a sense of the displeasure of God against their conduct."

2. Jesus Christ did not understand the law of Moses, which was the rule of duty in the Sinai covenant, in the same sense with the Pharisees, as requiring such a kind of obedience as they performed, and as other unconverted men may perform; but professedly undertook to give another explanation of it. This he did in his Sermon on the Mount, which may be considered as a confutation of the Pharisaic scheme of religion. But a man may comply with Mr. M.'s external covenant fully, who has not the least degree of that religion taught in this sermon. A graceless man may live up to Mr. M.'s covenant, and at the same time be entirely destitute of a compliance with the law of Moses, in our Savior's sense of it; for, says Christ, "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, shall be like a man that built his house upon a rock." But a man may hear and do those things required in Mr. M.'s external covenant, and yet finally be like the man that built his house upon the sand; as he himself allows.

3. The law of Moses, which was the rule of duty in the covenant into which the Israelites entered, required nothing but holiness. That covenant, which was externally exhibited, and externally entered into, was so far from being altogether a graceless covenant, that it required nothing but true grace and real holiness; nothing but love, with all its various exercises and fruits, in heart and life — love to God and man: of this we are expressly assured by one who came from God, and infallibly understood the nature of that dispensation. "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" said a Pharisee to our Savior, referring to the law of Moses. "Jesus said

unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Thus he had answered the Pharisee's question. But he proceeded to add another sentiment, which effectually overthrew the Pharisaic scheme. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." For if the law obliged the Jew to perform every duty in a holy manner, out of love, and required no other kind of obedience but this; if all the law and the prophets hung on these two commands; so that radically love was all; so that this holy love was the fulfilling of the law, (Rom. xiii. 8, 10;) then the Pharisees, who were entirely destitute of this, were equally destitute of that kind of religion required in the Mosaic law, and so their scheme was completely overthrown.*

4. It is manifest, that Moses himself instructed the Israelites to understand the covenant in this sense, and that the blessings of it were promised, not to an ungracious, but to a holy obedience. Moses did instruct the Israelites to understand it in this sense, as requiring holiness. Deut. vi. 4, 5: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Lev. xix. 18: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And as requiring nothing but holiness. Deut. x. 12: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul"—and that the

* It is not only a fundamental maxim in the Scripture scheme of religion, that "love is the fulfilling of the law," but it is expressly affirmed, that without love the highest gifts and the greatest attainments, the most expensive deeds, and the most cruel sufferings, are nothing, and will profit nothing. The apostle Paul carries the point so far as to say, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;" as destitute of true and real virtue; "and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing;" and to carry the point as high as it can possibly be carried, he adds, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing;" for in his view charity, or love, was the sum total of all virtue. And so there is no virtue in any knowledge, faith, or practice, any further than there is love in them; and where there is no love, these are all nothing; in a word, holiness in the creature is a conformity to God's moral perfections. The law is a transcript of God's moral character; God is love. The whole of what the law requires, is love, with all its various exercises and fruits; therefore love is the sum of all virtue; therefore, where there is no love there is no virtue; not the least degree of a real conformity to God's nature and law. Were this point understood and attended to, it would put an end to more than half the disputes in the Christian world.

blessings of it were promised to this holy obedience? This was one clause of the covenant, (Exod. xx. 6,) "showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments;" and thus it was afterwards explained, (Deut. xi. 22:) "For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you," etc. And if any man will read the first eleven chapters of Deuteronomy, he will see with what plainness and fidelity Moses explained the covenant to the Israelites; or rather let the whole book be read through from beginning to end in this view.

5. The same kind of faith in God, as their conductor through the wilderness to the promised land, which was a type of the heavenly Canaan, was required of the whole congregation of Israel in their covenant, as is required of every believer, under the gospel dispensation, in Christ Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, on whom we depend to conduct us safe through this world to that rest that remains for the people of God: and this they professed, when they professed to take Jehovah for their God; and for the want of this faith their carcasses fell in the wilderness, just as false professors under the gospel fall short of heaven through unbelief; as is plain from Num. xiv. Heb. iii. and iv. And this, beyond all dispute, is a saving faith, a faith of a holy nature, and not the faith of devils.

6. Paul understood Moses to include the covenant of grace in his law. This is so plain, that any may see it, that will read and compare Rom. x. 6—10, with Deut. xxx. 11—13.

7. Peter also understood the holiness required in the Sinai covenant to be the same kind of holiness which the gospel requires of true saints, and without which no man shall see the Lord; as is so evident, that none will fail to see it, that will read and compare 1 Pet. i. 15, 16, with Lev. xix. 2.

Thus it appears, that the covenant externally exhibited, and externally entered into, in the wilderness, was not a graceless, but a holy covenant.

Objection. "It will follow that perfect and sinless obedience was what they professed;" for "nothing short of perfection comes up to the demand of loving God with all the heart. Although, therefore, they entered into a covenant which required them to love God with all their hearts, yet the profession which they then made, cannot consistently be understood as a profession, that at that time there was such a heart in

them; but that such a heart was their duty, and intended as the object of their pursuit. But that an unrenewed sinner can in no sense, be said to seek such a heart, is what to me wants proof."

Answer. Although the Israelites did not profess a perfect compliance with the law of perfection, yet they did profess a cordial compliance with it, even with the whole of it; but the unrenewed sinner can in no Scripture sense be said cordially to comply with it, in the least degree. But to be more particular: —

1. In this objection, Mr. M. grants one main point for which we contend, namely, that the law, which was the rule of duty in the Sinai covenant, required perfect holiness. He must therefore acknowledge, that it forbade every sin, the least as well as the greatest; and that it therefore required nothing but holiness; and that therefore his unholy, graceless covenant was not required by it, or contained in it.

2. It will, on the other hand, be readily granted by us, that the law of God, considered as requiring perfect holiness, and forbidding every sin, the least as well as the greatest, is the rule of life to believers; and as such, is presupposed and implied in the covenant of grace, which is not designed to make void, but to establish the law. (Rom. iii. 31.) And therefore, whenever the covenant of grace is complied with in the exercise of faith, the law, in the very act, is cordially received as a rule of life by the believer; even as Abraham received that divine injunction, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," in the very act of his renewing covenant with God. (Gen. xvii.) But I have endeavored already to explain and prove this at large in an essay on the nature and glory of the gospel.

3. None can consistently pretend, that Moses intended to lead the Israelites to profess sinless perfection in that covenant; because the daily sacrifice of a lamb, the great type of the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, which was to be offered, morning and evening continually, as well as a great variety of other sacrifices of atonement, were essential parts of the Sinai covenant. But these had been needless institutions, had perfect holiness been professedly expected; for it was professedly expected that they would keep covenant; for they were taken into covenant in that view. "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie."

4. And yet no fact can be plainer than that Moses led them to receive the whole law for the rule of their lives, and that they professed to do this. Exod. xxiv. 3: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judg-

ments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Compared with Deut. xxvi. 17: "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice." For they professed, not merely to give the assent of their understandings to this truth, namely, that the law of God ought to be the rule of their lives, but, to use the modern phrase, they professed the consent of their wills. "All the words which the Lord hath spoken will we do." And God declares that this was "well said." And had there been "such a heart in them," answerable to their visible profession, they would have been Israelites indeed; for their hearts would then have been right in the sight of God, and they would have been steadfast in his covenant. (Num. xxxii. 11, 12.) Their profession therefore was full enough: but they lied to God with their tongues. Their profession was as full as God desired; but there was not such a heart in them. (Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37.)

5. For it is the peculiar character of the regenerate cordially to receive the divine law as the rule of their lives, (Heb. viii. 10;) but it is the universal character of the unregenerate to be in a state of total contrariety to the divine law in their hearts; "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

6. Therefore, as every true believer does cordially receive the law of God for the rule of his life, so he may understandingly and honestly profess it; but one whose heart is in a state of total contrariety to the divine law, if he understands and honestly speaks the truth, must say, "I am not subject to the divine law, neither indeed can I be; yea, so far from it, that I am at enmity against God."

7. But none of the religious seekings and endeavors of one, in whom a total non-compliance with God's holy covenant takes place, are of the nature of a compliance with that covenant, in the least degree, as is self-evident.

8. Therefore there is no way left for a profession of a compliance with God's holy covenant, to those who know themselves to be unconverted, without lying, but to deny the doctrine of total depravity. For since the covenant cannot be proved to be an unholy, graceless one, we must pretend that graceless sinners have some grace, in order to obtain our end.

9. But if unconverted sinners have that grace, which is a compliance with the covenant of grace, then they are entitled to the blessings of the covenant of grace, to pardon, justifica-

tion, and eternal life; to say which, is at once to set aside the whole New Testament. Thus stands the case.

Now, what method Mr. M. will take to get along with his scheme, after time for reconsideration, is not yet known; or whether a gentleman of so much good sense will not rather give it up.

Obj. But if these things are true, it will follow, that the covenant with Abraham, the Sinai covenant, and the gospel covenant, are for substance one and the same covenant; even the covenant of grace; but this does not agree with many Scripture texts; for the apostle Paul distinguishes between the Abrahamic covenant and the Sinai covenant, between the promise to Abraham and the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, and calls them two covenants. (Gal. iii. 16, 17, 18; iv. 24.) And he represents the Sinai covenant, which he calls the law, as requiring perfect obedience on pain of the curse, (Gal. iii. 10;) and affirms that by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified, (Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16;) and that Abraham was not justified by the law, but by faith, (Gal. iii. 6—9;) and that the law is not of faith, (ver. 12,) but a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Ver. 24.) Moreover, it is plainly intimated, that in the Sinai covenant, God did not communicate sanctifying grace to those that were under it; but that in the gospel covenant he does. At Mount Sinai God wrote the law on tables of stone, and obliged the people to keep it; but did not give them a heart to do so; but in the new covenant God writes his law on the heart; that is, by the influences of his Spirit, gives a disposition of mind answerable to the law. (Heb. viii. 8, 12.) Therefore Paul calls the Sinai covenant the ministration of death and condemnation, and the letter that killeth, in distinction from the gospel, which he calls the spirits which giveth life, the ministration of the spirit, and the ministration of righteousness. (2 Cor. iii. 6—8.)

Ans. As Mr. M. maintains that the Abrahamic, the Sinai, and the gospel covenants, are for substance one and the same covenant, so the foregoing objection cannot consistently be made by him or by his admirers; nor has he taken any notice of it.

1. It may suffice therefore to say, that every self-righteous Jew was disposed to consider the Old Testament as a covenant of works, and every self-righteous Christian is disposed to consider the New Testament in the same light. They attended to the externals of that dispensation, and expected to find acceptance with God, by what they did. (Luke xviii. 11.

Rom. ix. 31, 32.) And their example is closely followed by too many under the Christian dispensation; neither of them understanding the true nature of the divine law. (Rom. vii. 8, 9.)

2. It is readily granted, that St. Paul taught that all self-righteous sinners, be they Jews or Christians, are under a law which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation; that this law is holy, just, and good; that they are in duty bound to fulfil this law themselves; that God is not bound to give them any assistance at all; and that it curses every one that continueth not in all things. And it is readily granted, that this law is a ministration of death and condemnation, and killeth. It was ordained to life; that is, it promises life to every one that lives up to it; but it is found to be unto death to every one who makes the attempt. (Rom. vii. 10.)

3. It is readily granted, that this law is as different from the Abrahamic covenant, and the gospel covenant, as the covenant of works is from the covenant of grace; and that it was the design of the apostle to set this difference in a clear and striking light, that he might kill all the self-righteous hopes of the self-righteous sinner; and convince him that there is no hope in his case, but of mere free grace through Jesus Christ. (Gal. iii. 10, 24. Rom. iii. 9, 25.)

4. It is also granted, that this law was one principal part of the Sinai covenant; and that every carnal Jew was under it, and held bound by it; yea, that it is the peculiar privilege of the true believer to be delivered from it; and that by being united to and interested in Christ Jesus, the second Adam, who hath completely answered its demands. (Rom. vi. 14; vii. 4—6. Gal. ii. 19, 20; iii. 10, 14.) And to grant these things is to grant all that the apostle says about this law. And yet consistently with all these things, it may be asserted, that, —

5. The Mosaic dispensation did reveal a way in which pardon of sin might be obtained; it did exhibit in types a shadow of the gospel way of obtaining pardon. (See Lev. iv., v., vi., and xvi.) And it did promise pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace to the penitent believer. (Lev. xxvi. 40—42. Deut. xxx. 1—6.) And the land of Canaan was a designed type of heaven; and long life and prosperity there, of eternal life and blessedness above. (Heb. iv. 1—11.) But this is the sum of what is intended, when the Sinai covenant is represented as a covenant of grace.

6. The Israelites, when they entered into covenant at Mount Sinai in words, did by their unbelief reject the covenant of grace in their hearts. (Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37. Heb. iii. 19.) And

therefore, notwithstanding they were then visibly married to God in a covenant containing the promises before mentioned, whereby they laid themselves under bonds to keep covenant, yet God was not obliged to give them a heart to keep covenant, by any promise contained in that dispensation, as he would have been, had they been sincere, and as he is to all who are united to Christ by a true and living faith. And so it came to pass that they broke covenant, in an open, public manner; and he regarded them not, but their carcasses fell in the wilderness; whereas God writes his law in the heart of the true believer, and effectually inclines him to walk in his ways. And thus every false professor, whether Jew or Christian, will fall short of the heavenly Canaan; as it is written, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit."—

7. But, if any, after all, shall insist that the Sinai covenant was merely a covenant of works, and that the Abrahamic covenant was not in any sense contained in it, they ought to consider, that if this be so, then the Sinai covenant ought to be entirely left out of the account in the present dispute, and circumcision ought to be considered as being in no sense a seal of it; for it was appointed to be a seal of the Abrahamic covenant, and of no other; and therefore, if the Abrahamic covenant was in no sense a part of the Sinai covenant, then circumcision was in no sense a seal of the Sinai covenant; for no new seals to the covenant of works have been appointed since Adam was turned out of paradise. And as for Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant, it never had any existence; the Bible knows nothing about it, either name or thing. We have already seen that it is not contained in the Old Testament, and we shall presently perceive that it is not to be found in the New.

SECTION IV.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT FROM MR. MATHER'S EXTERNAL, GRACELESS COVENANT.

It is true, the gospel consists in an external revelation; but then the thing revealed is the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ. It is also true, that the call of the gospel is an external call; but then the thing it calls us unto is a

belief and compliance with the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ. The gospel consists in the clearest and fullest external revelation of the way in which God may be just, and yet justify and save sinners; which way of salvation it constantly invites sinners to comply with, that they may be pardoned and saved; saying, "Come, for all things are now ready." This may be called an external covenant, as it is a visible exhibition of the covenant of grace, with which professors of Christianity visibly comply in a profession of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But in this view, it is essentially different from Mr. M.'s external covenant; for the gospel covenant promises pardon and eternal life to those who really comply with it; but one may comply with Mr. M.'s external covenant in sincerity and truth, and yet have no grace, and finally perish. For Mr. M.'s external covenant does not require saving grace, and may be perfectly complied with by one who is dead in sin; for it is an unholy, graceless covenant; and so it is essentially different from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

John Baptist did not baptize with the baptism of the external covenant, but with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. (Luke iii.)

Jesus Christ did not call men to comply with an external, graceless covenant, and be baptized, but to repent and believe the gospel, (Mark i. 15;) having counted the cost, to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him, (Luke xiv. 25—33;) promising eternal life to those who did so, (Matt. xix. 29;) representing graceless professors by salt that has lost its savor, and is good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot. (Matt. v. 13.) He warned his hearers against professing, and not living up to his religion, as an inconsistent conduct. (Luke vi. 46.) He called them to make such a profession as he might own to their honor in the heavenly world, before his Father. (Matt. x. 32.) Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. This is that profession unto which he invited men, and never invited them to any other: rather to false professors Christ declares it will be said, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" (Matt. xxii.)

The apostles had no commission to preach and baptize upon Mr. M.'s external covenant; but were expressly ordered to preach the gospel to every creature; a gospel that promised eternal life; and to baptize those who appeared to comply with it. (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) They were sent to make disciples, not to Mr. M.'s external covenant, but to Christianity. (Matt.

xxviii. 19, 20.) In a word, they were sent to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations in the name of Christ. (Luke xxiv. 47.) And they acted up to their commission.

When the three thousand were pricked in their heart, Peter did not tell them to comply with Mr. M.'s external covenant, and be baptized, which they might have done, and yet have continued impenitent and unpardoned; but exactly according to his Master's orders, he said, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." (Acts ii. 37, 38.) Repent first, and then be baptized.

And when Peter went to preach to Cornelius, it was not to preach up an external covenant, with which a man may comply and yet perish; but to declare to him the gospel way of salvation, to tell him words whereby he might be saved, and all his house. (Acts xi. 14.) And accordingly he preached the gospel, namely, that through Christ's name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (Acts x. 43.) But he said not one word about Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant. And when the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they glorified God, not that the Gentiles were admitted into an external, graceless covenant, a thing not heard of in the apostolic age; but they glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts xi. 18.) For it had been their notion, that an uncircumcised Gentile could not be saved. (Acts xv. 1.)

Peter, before he began his sermon, was well assured that Cornelius was a real saint; for Cornelius had known so much about the Jewish religion, that although born a pagan, yet he had renounced idolatry, and had become a true and acceptable worshipper of the God of Israel. He was a believer, in the same sense that Nathanael was, who was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile, and who, however, did not at that time know that Jesus was the Messiah who was to come. (John i. 43—47;) for without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. xi. 6.) But Cornelius obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, by an angel from heaven, which appeared to him, (Acts x. 4;) and by a vision which appeared to Peter, and a voice declaring Cornelius, though uncircumcised, yet in the sight of God to be not unclean, but clean; for that God himself had cleansed him. (Ver. 9—16.) Peter therefore began his sermon with a declaration, that Cornelius, although uncircumcised, was nevertheless in a state of acceptance with God. (Ver. 34, 35.) It had been mad work, therefore, for Peter to have preached up Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant, to one who was already really in the cove-

nant of grace, and whom Peter had just declared to be so. But Peter, far from this, knowing his business well, gave to him and to the whole company a brief narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; exhibiting the evidence there was, that he was indeed the promised Messiah, and that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins. (Ver. 36—43.) And it happened to the hearers, while he was preaching, as Christ said it would to them that believe, even in the very commission which he gave to his apostles. (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) "The Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word;" and that not only in his extraordinary gifts, but also in his sanctifying influences, and that to a great degree; for they not only "spake with tongues," but "magnified God;" as the blessed Virgin did, when filled with the Holy Ghost, (Luke i. 46;) or rather, as those who, on the day of Pentecost, spake the wonderful works of God. (Acts ii. 11.) This appearance struck Peter and all the saints present with astonishment. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" said Peter. And exactly in this point of light did Peter afterwards set this fact, when he gave a narrative of it to the council at Jerusalem. (Acts xv. 8, 9.) "And God which knoweth the hearts, beareth them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

And again, when Paul had the awakened jailer to instruct, and to prepare for baptism, he said not one word to him about Mr. M.'s external covenant, either name or thing; but preached the gospel to him, saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And thou shalt be "saved." He did not preach up a graceless faith, the faith of devils; but a saving faith. To that, and to no other, did he exhort the jailer, in order to prepare him for baptism.*

When Mr. Sandeman says, that "a simple belief of the simple truth"—the heart left out of the account—is saving faith, Mr. M. will doubtless agree with me in saying, "This cannot be saving faith, because the devil has it." When, therefore, Mr. Mather represents the eunuch as entering into covenant with God by the simple belief of the simple truth,

* It is not looked upon among men, ingenuous, fair, and honest, to lead any to sign and seal a bond before we let them know the contents of it. But the apostles led their converts to set their seal in baptism, without saying one word to them about Mr. M.'s external covenant, name or thing. This, therefore, was not the covenant which they led them to seal; nay, the apostles themselves do not appear to have known that there was any such covenant to be preached up by them, or to be sealed by their converts.

by an ungracious, unholy faith, and is resolved to make that phrase "with all thine heart" stand for nothing, I beg leave to reply, "This faith cannot bring those into covenant with God that have it, because the devil has it." And I humbly conceive that no man need be at a loss about the meaning of Philip's words, or of the eunuch's answer, that will compare them with Rom. x. 9: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" and with 1 John iv. 15: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and chap. v. 1: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." For just this was the profession which Philip demanded, and which the eunuch made.

And in this view of things, it is easy to discern the true reason why the apostolic churches were, in the epistles wrote to them, considered and treated as saints by the writers, who it is not to be supposed had any personal acquaintance at all with many of them; and why they were spoken of as "beloved of God," (Rom. i. 7;) "sanctified in Christ Jesus," (1 Cor. i. 2;) "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," (Eph. i. 4,) etc. For such they were by profession before all the world; and such, generally speaking, they proved themselves to be by their practice. Indeed, it was always expected, that tares would, more or less, be among the wheat; but the apostles did not think it their duty to sow tares knowingly and on design. In that age of the church, this was thought to be the work of the devil. (Matt. xiii. 39.) And methinks he may now, in our age, do enough at it, without any help from the clergy. And if professors in that age lived up to their profession, and gave abundant evidence of their sincerity, by the holiness of their lives, as Mr. M. observes they did, then they were indeed "the salt of the earth, and the light of the world," in their profession and in their practice too, as all church members ought to be. (Matt. v. 13—15.) Nor did the apostles think it a thing of dangerous tendency to treat them as such in the most public manner, in the sight of the world; as Mr. M. must have thought on his scheme. These were churches of visible saints, who appeared to be the body of Christ, a living body to a living head; and not synagogues of Satan, to which graceless professors are said to belong, in Rev. ii. 9.

To conclude: When we read the life of John Baptist, and of Jesus Christ; when we read the commission given to the apostles, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and when we read

the history of their conduct in the Acts, and consider how they treated the churches which they set up, nothing can be plainer, than that they preached the gospel, made proselytes to Christianity, set up Christian churches on the gospel plan; and not on the plan of an external, graceless covenant — a thing not heard of in that age.

Objection. "But there was not time to examine the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, in order to form a judgment of their gracious state; nor to judge of them by their fruits."

Answer. They professed to comply with Peter's exhortation, "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins." Their profession, circumstanced as it was, was to all appearance sincere. And this was enough; for the doctrine of the necessity of an infallible certainty, that professors were what they professed themselves to be, in order to their admission into the church, was not an apostolic doctrine. And besides, they had as much time to examine into their grace, as into their moral sincerity.

Obj. "How could the character of the apostles be maintained as infallibly inspired guides to the church, when those they had received did so often prove hypocrites, false brethren, and apostates?"

Ans. By infallible inspiration, they were taught that it was God's prerogative to search the heart. They never pretended to do it themselves. They preached repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Their converts professed that repentance and faith which they preached. They received them upon their profession; they expected there would be tares among the wheat; but they did not mean to sow tares knowingly and upon design: this was the work of the devil; and is it not fit that the ministers of Christ should take the work of the devil out of his hands?

Obj. "It is true, Peter said of Cornelius and those that were with him, 'God put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.' But he said this some years after, in which time they had doubtless given sufficient evidence; but this is of no weight to prove that they were admitted to baptism on that supposition."

Ans. If he did say this some years after, and if they had in that time given ever so great evidence of the sincerity of their conversion, yet Peter says not one word about this consequent evidence, nor gives the least hint that they had given such evidence. He mentions not one single fact on which his charity for them was founded, but that only which happened

before they were baptized, namely, "giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did unto us." But the apostles received not only the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, but also large effusions of his sanctifying influences, filling their hearts with love to divine things. And out of the abundance of their hearts, their mouths spake of the wonderful works of God. (Acts ii. 11.) And it happened to Cornelius and his household just as it had to the apostles on the day of Pentecost; and their hearts were filled with divine love; and out of the abundance of their hearts their mouth spake, magnifying God, extolling and praising him for the glorious display of his perfections in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, (Acts x. 46;) by which Peter and the saints who were with him perceived, to their full satisfaction, that these Gentile converts had the same holy views, and holy affections, which they themselves had; which led Peter to say, "God bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." This is the plain and natural sense.

SECTION V.

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER ARE SEALS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE, AND OF NO OTHER COVENANT.

Mr. Mather says, "Seals are rites of confirmation. Nothing is confirmed by the seal, but what is expressed in the written instrument to which it is annexed; and thus, God confirms and ratifies nothing by the sacraments, but what is contained in the declarations of his word." "These seals, with respect to us, confirm the profession which we make, and the engagements we come under." So that, if the "written instrument" is the covenant of grace, God, by affixing his seal, ratifies his promise to save those that comply with it; and this, on God's part, is the import of the action of sealing. And, if the "written instrument" is the covenant of grace, the professor, by actively receiving the seal, declares, on his part, that he does comply with that covenant, and ratifies his engagements to live up to it; for thus it is in all mutual covenants among men: where both parties seal, they do by sealing declare a present compliance with the bargain, and mutually oblige

themselves to act up to it for the future — to the bargain, I say, as contained in the written instrument; to that, and to nothing else. So that when once it is determined what is contained in the written instrument, it is at the same time determined what is sealed, and what is the import of the act of sealing. But Mr. M. says, "The sealing ordinances, by which the external covenant is sealed and confirmed, do equally seal and confirm the covenant of grace." Upon which it may be observed that, to be consistent, it will follow, —

1. That when a graceless man seals the external graceless covenant, binding himself to perform all the graceless duties which it requires, he does at the same time equally seal the covenant of grace, and equally bind himself to perform all the gracious duties which this requires. And whereas these two covenants require religious exercises of a contrary nature, even as contrary as graceless and gracious, which, in other words, are as contrary as sin and holiness, so Mr. M.'s unconverted covenanter, in the act of sealing these two contrary covenants, binds himself to perform all religious duties in these two contrary manners; and that at the same time; for he binds himself, by sealing both covenants at once, to perform every duty, as both covenants require, from day to day, as long as he lives; and every time he comes to the Lord's table, he binds himself afresh. But our Savior says, "No man can serve two masters." Besides, on this plan, the door of the visible church is shut against all who know themselves to be graceless; for they cannot make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace; and so the end and design of Mr. M.'s whole scheme is frustrated.

2. It will also follow from Mr. M.'s own words, that when a godly man, Abraham, for instance, sealed the external covenant and the covenant of grace, both at once, he equally bound himself through life to perform all religious duties, both in a gracious and ungracious manner, at the same time. But how could Abraham, at the same time, serve these two contrary masters, requiring things as contrary as sin and holiness? Or how could he, being a godly man, with a good conscience, bind himself by covenant to perform all religious duties in an unholy manner? Surely he could not do it! And so, on Mr. M.'s plan, the door of the visible church is shut against both the godly and the wicked. The godly cannot come to sacraments, because they are seals of an unholy covenant, binding them to live in a course of unholy duties; and the ungodly, knowing themselves to be

such, cannot come, because they are seals of a holy covenant, binding them to live in a course of holy duties.*

3. Therefore Mr. M. must give up the common notion of a seal, as declaring a present compliance with, and binding both parties to act up to, what is contained in the written instrument, or else he must honestly leave the covenant of grace out of the written instrument, or he must give up his scheme as wholly inconsistent. To solve this difficulty, he says, "In their primary reference, they may be seals of the external covenant; and yet, consistently in their ultimate reference, may be seals of the covenant of grace." But if they in fact really seal both covenants, then the man who comes to the sacraments, does in fact really bind himself to fulfil both covenants. For, let him ask any lawyer on the continent, and he will be told that by sealing a "written instrument," if it contains two or ten covenants, we oblige ourselves either to fulfil all of them, or none of them. The truth is, Mr. M. had proposed this objection against his scheme, namely, "The preceding discourse represents the sealing ordinances of the gospel, not as seals of the covenant of grace, but of the external covenant with the visible church." And he had no way to get rid of it, according to his scheme, but to run into these inconsistencies, or roundly to deny the received doctrine of the Christian church, that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace. He has denied it implicitly; but he did not choose to deny it expressly; but seems to own it; and so runs himself into these inconsistencies.

But if we turn our eyes off from Mr. M.'s inconsistent scheme to the New Testament, which was designedly adapted to the capacities of common people, we shall see not the least appearance of two covenants, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are the appointed seals; we shall find no covenant but the covenant of grace; no gospel, but the gospel of Jesus Christ, which promises pardon and eternal salvation to the penitent believer; and baptism and the Lord's supper are represented as seals to no other covenant but this. For, to use Mr. M.'s phrase, in the "written instrument" God promises salvation to the true believer. (Mark xvi. 16.) Therefore, "if thou believest with all

* Mr. M. thinks that there "was a manifest propriety in choosing Abraham, a man of eminent holiness," to be the head of this graceless covenant; but I am of our Savior's mind, (Matt. xii. 33,) "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." Let holy Abraham be at the head of a holy covenant; but let some graceless professor be at the head of Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant; for it was contrary to the Jewish law to yoke an ox and an ass together; and, saith the apostle Paul, What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

thine heart," thou mayest be active in receiving the seal of the covenant, said Philip, divinely inspired. (Acts viii. 37.)

Again, in the "written instrument" God promises remission of sins to the true penitent through Jesus Christ, (Luke xxiv. 47.) Therefore repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins, (Acts ii. 38,)—that is, comply with the covenant, and then be active in receiving the seal,—was the language of a divinely inspired apostle. And another divinely inspired minister of Christ, already knowing the man to be a true penitent, and so prepared to be active in receiving the seal of the covenant, said, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts xxii. 16.) Thus we see what covenant is ratified and confirmed by this seal, on God's part.

And because the apostolic professors, in offering themselves to baptism, and in being active in receiving the seal of the covenant, did on their part thereby bind themselves to live according to all things contained in it, therefore Paul said, (Gal. iii. 27,) "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ;" not put on the external covenant, but put on Christ; that is, put on Christianity; so as to be entitled to the heavenly Canaan, granting their hearts to answer to their external conduct; for he adds, "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise." Heirs to what? To all the blessings of the covenant; particularly to the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly Canaan was a type, and which, Paul had just said, was given to Abraham by promise.

And because in baptism, in the apostolic age, men professed a cordial compliance with the covenant of grace, and bound themselves in all things to be affected and act accordingly, therefore, when it was objected that Paul's doctrine of justification by faith without works, tended to make men licentious, and to encourage them to live in sin, that grace might abound, he thought it sufficient to say, "This can never be, for we have been baptized, and so we are dead to sin and alive to God." "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life; for if we have been [in baptism] planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. For sin shall not have

dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace," (Rom. vi. 1—14;) which proves, that in baptism they professed a compliance with Christianity itself, and not with Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant, with which a man may comply, while under the dominion of sin.

And indeed, for men to come to the apostles to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, could consistently mean nothing less than a public practical declaration of a present compliance with what the gospel reveals concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and an engagement to act accordingly in all future time; in which the whole of Christianity consists. To believe what the gospel reveals concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to receive God for our Father, and Christ for our mediator, and the Holy Ghost for our enlightener and sanctifier; and to be affected and act accordingly, is the whole of Christianity. But to be active in offering ourselves to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and in the very act to refuse in our hearts, and in the sight of God, to have God for our Father, or Christ for our Savior, or the Holy Ghost for our Sanctifier, is to contradict ourselves in the sight of God. It is to lie to the Holy Ghost. It is to renounce Christianity in heart, at the very moment when we embrace it in our visible conduct. But such wicked dissimulation is not an appointed means of grace.

As to the Lord's supper, our Savior teacheth us, that it is the seal of the new covenant, in which remission of sins is offered through the blood of Christ. "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." Which is essentially different from Mr. M.'s external covenant, by which no remission of sins can be obtained.

At the Lord's table, Christ, by the mouth of his minister, says, "This is my body; take ye, eat ye all of it. This is my blood; take ye, drink ye all of it;" hereby sealing to the truth contained in the "written instrument." But it is therein written in so many words, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give him is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John vi. 51, 56.) Thus it is written, and thus it is sealed on Christ's part. On the other hand, the communicant, by his practice, declares, "I take his flesh, and eat it. I take his blood, and drink it;" and seals the covenant on his part; and thus the

"written instrument" is externally and visibly sealed, ratified, and confirmed on both sides, with as much formality as any "written instrument" is mutually sealed by the parties in any covenant among men. And now, if both parties are sincere in the covenant thus sealed, and if both abide by and act according to it, the communicant will be saved; for salvation is promised in the "written instrument" to those who eat his flesh and drink his blood. This promise is sealed by Christ at the Lord's table. The condition of it is externally complied with, in the sacramental actions, by the communicant, who visibly eats his flesh and drinks his blood. And if the exercises of his heart answer to his external actions, the covenant is on his part complied with, sealed, ratified, and confirmed; and if the gospel is true, he will be saved.

But if the communicant's heart does not answer to his external sacramental actions, but, on the contrary, if, when he visibly and sacramentally eats his flesh and drinks his blood, even at that very time, in his heart and in the sight of God, he rejects his flesh and his blood, his atonement, and all the blessings purchased by his death, his visible actions are a lie; and lying is not a converting ordinance.

An impenitent sinner under legal terrors may forsake bad company, lay aside the practice of uncleanness, of drunkenness, of backbiting, of lying and cheating, etc.; he may make restitution to those whom he has injured in name and estate; he may spend much time in hearing and reading the word of God, in meditating on death and judgment, heaven and hell, in comparing his thoughts, words, and actions, with the law of God, and with the gospel of Christ; and he may spend much time in secret prayer, and in trying to get his heart deeply affected with eternal things, etc., without lying. And thus reforming his life, and attending these means, may be useful to promote a conviction of his sinful, guilty, helpless, ruined state. But lying tends to sear his conscience and harden his heart in sin. To make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace with his mouth, when he knows he does not comply with it in his heart, and to renew this covenant at the table of the Lord in visible actions, while he continues to reject it in his heart, and knows this to be the case with him, is wilful lying, and tends directly to the eternal ruin of the sinnner's immortal soul.

Objection. "By my sacramental actions I mean to acknowledge, that the gospel is true; but not to profess a compliance with it."

Answer. Should your neighbor treat you thus, in any cove-

nant depending between you; should he say, "I own the things contained in it are true, but I do not mean to bind myself to fulfil the covenant, by signing and sealing it before evidence;" you, and all the world, would look upon him as a dishonest quibbler.

Obj. "But I mean to have the truth of the gospel deeply impressed upon my heart by the ordinance."

Ans. This end might be as well obtained, if you tarried as a spectator. Those who stand by as witnesses, when a bond is signed and sealed, may know what is done, as well as those who are parties, and who bind themselves. Men that mean not to bind themselves should not sign and seal the bond. No one seals a bond, unless he means to bind himself to fulfil it. Should a man offer to sign and seal a bond, which he did not mean to bind himself to fulfil, in order to get his heart affected with what is contained in it, his neighbors would think him delirious.

Obj. "But I mean to bind myself to 'endeavor' to fulfil it; that is, 'to endeavor to conform my practice to the rules of it.'"

Ans. Should you offer your house and farm to your neighbor upon the most reasonable terms, which, if he had a heart, he might fulfil with ease and pleasure; and should he plainly tell you, that at present he could not find it in his heart to comply with your offer; nor could he promise that he ever should comply; but, however, he was willing to bind himself to "endeavor" to comply, and no more; you would doubtless think best to put off the bargain till you should find him of another temper. And what our Savior thinks best in the present case, is most plainly expressed in Luke xiv. 25—33.

SECTION VI.

IT CANNOT BE DETERMINED WHAT MR. M.'S EXTERNAL COVENANT REQUIRES, AND WHEREIN A REAL COMPLIANCE WITH IT DOTH CONSIST, SO THAT ANY MAN CAN EVER KNOW THAT HE HAS COMPLIED WITH IT.

NEGATIVELY, Mr. M. has determined, with great exactness, what it does not require, and what is not necessary in order to a perfect compliance with it; namely, holiness. For it requires no holiness at all; no, not the least spark of true grace. So that, if we could know what it did require, it might be per-

fectly complied with by one who is quite dead in sin. This is very plain.

Positively he has not determined what it does require, so that any man can ever know that he has complied with it; nor can it be determined by him, or by any other. For it cannot be determined from Scripture, for the Scripture knows nothing about such a covenant, either name or thing. And it cannot be determined from reason; for it is supposed to be a matter of pure revelation.

Indeed, Mr. M. has attempted to settle this matter. He says, "I will allow, that none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will endeavor to conform his practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church." Upon which it may be observed,—

1. That Abraham made no profession at all of any faith, but of a saving faith. He believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness. And if Abraham is to be our pattern, as Mr. M. insists, then we must make a profession of this faith, or of none. To set aside Abraham's faith, which was, as James asserts, a living faith; and to introduce into its room a dead faith, which James calls the faith of devils; and to substitute this in the stead of the faith of Abraham, and to put God's seal, which belongs to God's covenant, to this new-invented covenant of human device, is not "to conform our practice to the rules" of God's word; nor so much as to "endeavor" it. Besides,—

2. Mr. M. says, "That by which any one was to enter into this" external "covenant, was an external mark in the flesh." But faith, although a dead faith, is an internal thing, and is as much invisible, as any other mental qualification whatsoever: and therefore is not necessary on his scheme to be in the heart of the professor; nor need he profess it to be in his heart; for "to require more of the person to be admitted into the church, than is made necessary by the covenant on which it is framed, is really absurd." For to imitate his manner of reasoning, it may be said, "To set this matter in the clearest light, an infidel, or an atheist, with a fair profession of the external covenant, when he is received into the visible church, on Mr. M.'s scheme, is in the sight of God either a member of it, or he is not. If he is a member, then the faith of devils is not necessary. If he is not, then on Mr. M.'s scheme there can be no visible church." This is Mr. M.'s manner of reasoning.* I hope this may show

* These are Mr. M.'s words: "To set this matter in the clearest light: An unregenerate man, with a fair profession of religion, when received into the visible church, is in reality either a member of it, or he is not: if he is a member,

the inconsistency of excluding a living faith, because it is an invisible mental qualification; and yet retaining a dead faith, which is equally an invisible mental qualification. To make Mr. M.'s scheme consistent, no mental qualification ought to be professed: nothing but baptism, which is substituted in the room of circumcision, is needful: baptism alone, without any profession at all, is the only requisite to constitute any man a member of Mr. M.'s visible church. But in the apostolic age, no man was ever received into the visible church by baptism alone, without a profession. Mr. M. is obliged, therefore, to allow of the necessity of a profession. But this supposes the necessity of some mental, invisible, internal qualification to be professed: but this is inconsistent with the notion, that nothing is necessary but what is external and visible. So his scheme cannot hang together. Besides, —

3. To have no other faith than the devil has, and to profess no other faith than he has professed, is not to enter into covenant with God, unless the devil is in covenant with God. Therefore let the articles of faith to which professors give their assent be ever so orthodox, and their profession be ever so true, yet, if they profess only "a simple belief of the simple truth," it is not a visible entering into covenant with God; it is not a covenanting transaction. Where there is no consent of the will professed, there is no covenant visibly made, in any case whatsoever. But if they profess not only to believe, but to love the truth, this is what no ungodly man can understandingly and honestly do; for to receive the truth in the love of it, is the Scripture character of a true saint, (2 Thess. ii. 10;) and so did Abraham, the father of all believers.

4. "To conform our practice to the rules of the Christian religion," is to be real Christians: this, therefore, must not be

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his union must be constituted by something besides the covenant of grace, which extends to none but such as have true grace in heart: but if he is not in reality a member of the visible church, then there can be no such thing as a visible church, that has a real existence." *Ans.* The visible union of the visible church is constituted by a visible credible profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace; just as their real union is constituted by a real compliance with the covenant of grace.

To set this matter in the clearest light: In a Spanish milled dollar there is a certain quantity of silver, the stamp, &c. Silver is essential to a real dollar. If there is no silver in the seeming dollar, it is not a real dollar, but a counterfeit one. So here — if a body of men profess friendship to Christ, they are a visible church of Christ; but if there is no friendship in their hearts, they are like the counterfeit dollar.

Should any one object, "A pewter dollar, with a good stamp, and well washed over, is a real dollar, or it is not: if it is a real dollar, then silver is not essential to a real dollar: if it is not a real dollar, then there is no such thing as a visible dollar in the world;" would any man, by such logic as this, be induced to receive pewter dollars, professedly such, in pay for his whole estate?

professed: but without this, there is no compliance with the gospel covenant. He who does conform his practice to the rules of the gospel, does really comply with the gospel; and he who doth not, does really reject it. The one will go to heaven, and the other will go to hell. In this we are all agreed.

5. But Mr. M. says, they must profess, that they "will endeavor" to conform their practice to the rules of the Christian religion. But, pray, how much must they endeavor? Not so much as actually to conform; for in this real Christianity consists. How much then? can any man tell?' Will you say, "As much as they can"? What! quite as much? What! every day, every hour of their lives? This is what no ungodly man ever did, or ever will do. Will you say, "They must sincerely endeavor"? But how sincere must ungodly men be? "As sincere as they can"? What, quite as sincere as they can, every day and every hour? This is what no ungodly man ever was, or ever will be. Will you say, "They must endeavor so much, and so sincerely, as to keep from open scandal"? But is this enough? What if they live allowedly in secret sins, in enmity to God, in enmity to their neighbors, in stealing, in adultery, in sodomy? Will this do? Is this enough in the sight of God and conscience, that they are free from open scandal, while they live secretly in such and such like sins? Will you say, "No; they must endeavor to forsake all sin, and to conform their practice to all the rules of the Christian religion"? But the question still returns, How much must they endeavor? Not so much as to get free from the dominion of sin; for this is peculiar to the godly. (Rom. vi. 14.) How much then? No son of Adam can ever tell.

It can be determined what that repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, is, which the gospel requires; and a man may know when he complies with the gospel covenant; but it cannot be determined what Mr. M.'s external covenant requires; nor can any man know when he complies with it.

The lowest degree of true grace is a real and saving compliance with the gospel covenant. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Where saving grace begins, it shall end in glory. Its special nature can be as certainly determined as the nature of the gospel way of salvation can; for it consists in a compliance with the gospel; but this external covenant is neither law nor gospel.

No man will say, that "the least degree of endeavor" which

ever takes place in an ungodly man, is all that is required, to bring men into the external covenant. Nor will any man say, "that the greatest degree of endeavor" that ever takes place in an ungodly man, is necessary to this end. Nor can any man fix upon any certain degree between the least and the greatest, that is the very degree necessary to bring a man into this covenant. It is a blind affair, and is adapted only to a blind conscience.

Every ungodly man, whose conscience is thoroughly awakened to know the truth about himself, knows that he is dead in sin, an enemy to God, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil;" as Mr. M. will allow; and therefore, were such men to make a profession of the truth, they would profess this; and confess themselves to be altogether helpless and undone, under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and condemned by the gospel, (John iii. 18, 36. Gal. iii. 10,) and incapable of entering into covenant with God, (Ps. l. 16,) and coming into the kingdom of Christ, until they are born again. (John iii. 5.) And how much soever pains such may take to escape everlasting burnings, they can never think that this labor of theirs brings them into covenant with the Holy One of Israel, so long as they find themselves dead in sin, enemies to God, and rejecters of Jesus Christ; but rather in the midst of all their diligence and endeavors, they do, as Mr. M. elsewhere observes,* "in their own apprehensions grow worse and worse."

The best saint on earth would not dare, with his eyes open, to enter into covenant with the Holy One of Israel, without a mediator; or in the neglect of him whom God has provided on the foot of his own righteousness. No saint can have impudence enough, with his eyes open, to offer such a thing to God; for such know no way to come to the Father but by the Son. (John xiv. 6.) But self-righteous sinners, with stupid consciences, are good enough to come nigh to God in their own names, and enter into covenant with God in their own strength, and in their own righteousness, while with their whole heart they reject the Mediator and the Sanctifier revealed in the gospel; but that baptism and the Lord's supper should be so degraded and prostituted, as to become seals to this self-righteous, graceless covenant of works, must be not a little shocking to many pious minds. Nor indeed can sinners under deep and genuine conviction come into this scheme; for this external covenant is not adapted to the state of a sinner under genuine

* Sermon on Rom. ix. 14, 15, p. 28.

and deep conviction; for it is with such agreeable to Rom. vii. 9: "The commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Rather it is suited only to the hearts of secure, self-flattering, self-righteous sinners, of blind and stupid consciences; and is of no use but to build them up in their self-righteous ways; to lead them to cry, "We have Abraham to our father; yea, we have one father, even God;" when, in the language of Christ, the meek and lowly Jesus, they are the children of the devil, and the wrath of God abideth on them. (Matt. iii. 9. John viii. 39—44; iii. 36.)

SECTION VII.

VARIOUS DISTINCTIONS STATED, TO RENDER THE SUBJECT MORE EASY TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY CHRISTIANS OF THE WEAKEST CAPACITIES, AND TO ENABLE THEM TO ANSWER THE USUAL OBJECTIONS, AT LEAST TO THEIR OWN SATISFACTION.

1. We are to distinguish between objections, which are taken from the nature of the covenant, as contained in the written instrument, and those objections which are taken from the character of many that have sealed it. If there was not one unholy, graceless duty required of Abraham, in that covenant, (Gen. xvii.,) with which he complied, and which he sealed, Mr. M. must lose his cause, although the names and seals of thousands of graceless hypocrites are found annexed to it. For the nature of a written covenant is to be determined from the contents of it, and not from the hypocrisy of the men that have signed and sealed it; as for example: Suppose we have a bond of one thousand pounds, signed and sealed by a man not worth a groat; it alters not the case; the bond is a bond of one thousand pounds, as much as if it was signed and sealed by a man ever so rich; for all mankind are agreed in this, that the nature of the bond is to be determined from the contents of the written instrument, and not from the poverty or knavery of the signers and sealers.

If the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, yet possibly thousands of graceless men might be active in sealing it. Or, if the covenant with Abraham required only freedom from open scandal, yet possibly it might be sealed by thousands who lived in open scandal. The ten tribes, for aught that appears, practised circumcision without one exception; and yet they lived in open idolatry from the time of their

revolt to their captivity; that is, about two hundred and fifty years. And if we are to determine the nature of the covenant from the character of the sealers, then from this it will follow, that freedom from open idolatry was not required of the Israelites, in the covenant which they were under, and of which circumcision was a seal.

2. We ought to distinguish between *fact* and *right*, and to understand, that there is no conclusive arguing from the one to the other; as for instance: It is fact, that there were tares sowed in the field; but it does not follow that it was right that the servants should sow them there: this was the work of the devil. It is fact, that there was a man who came into the visible church without a wedding garment; but it does not follow that it was right for him so to do. It is fact, that there were false professors, who unawares crept into the apostolic churches; but it does not follow that it was right that they should creep in thither. It is fact, that the net gathered bad fishes as well as good; but it does not follow that the fishermen were employed to gather any but good fish. It is fact, that in the apostolic age, some impenitent hypocrites made a profession of faith and repentance, and were baptized; but it does not follow that it was right in them to make such a false profession. It is fact, that the Israelites at Mount Sinai made a false profession, that they lied to God with their tongues, and flattered him with their lips; but it does not follow, either that it was right for them to do as they did, or that it is right for us to imitate their wicked example. It is fact, that there have been in all ages graceless men in the visible church; but it does not follow, either that they had a right to be there, or that we ought to lay aside the covenant of grace, and to introduce a graceless covenant, merely in order to open a door for their regular admission. It is fact, when the doctrines and discipline of the gospel are brought down to the taste of carnal men, that they appear to be better pleased with both; but it does not therefore follow that it would be right for ministers to combine to set aside truth and strictness, and to introduce error and looseness, in order to please a wicked world.

3. There is a distinction to be made between an adult person's *really* entering into covenant, and *visibly* entering into covenant. He who complies with the covenant of grace, really enters into it; but he who professes to comply with it, visibly enters into it. The former is peculiar to the godly; but ungodly men may do the latter; for none but the godly comply with the covenant of grace; but many ungodly men profess to comply with it. And these are like dry branches.

4. There is a difference between being in the covenant of grace, by a compliance with it, and being under the bonds of the covenant of grace, without a compliance with it. The former is peculiar to the godly; and from this state of grace none fall away: the latter is true of the most scandalous professor. An adulteress may be under the bonds of the marriage covenant; and that even while she persists obstinately in her adulteries; but this gives her no right to the peculiar privileges of a virtuous wife. In this sense the idolatrous Israelites were in covenant with God, notwithstanding their obstinacy in that most scandalous practice of idolatry, (Jer. iii. 14;) but this gave them no right to covenant blessings. For it is our compliance with the covenant of grace which gives an interest in its blessings; and not our being under the bonds of it; for the ten tribes, who are said, in Jer. iii. 14, to be married to the Lord, and who had lived in idolatry ever since the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, for thus playing the harlot, had been put away, and a bill of divorce had been given to them. They had been turned out of the promised land, and sent into captivity, above a hundred years ago, (2 Kings xvii. 6;) and so had not only forfeited, but were actually dispossessed of all the external privileges of the Abrahamic covenant; and yet they were still under covenant bonds. And so an excommunicated person may, in this sense, be said to be in covenant, even in the covenant of grace; for the engagement he came under to live according to that covenant all his days, when he made a profession of religion, is as binding in the sight of God as ever. But being in covenant in this sense, although it may increase obligation and guilt, yet entitles to no covenant privileges.

5. We are to distinguish between the means which God uses to bring us to comply with the covenant of grace, and our consenting to seal it in token of compliance. Those who have not complied with the covenant of grace, may attend the former without lying; but we ought in all cases to consent to a covenant in our hearts, before we are active in sealing it with our hands; for to seal a covenant with our hands, when we reject it in our hearts, is in the sight of God to lie; but lying is not a means of grace.

6. We are to distinguish between the *man's* rule, and the *church's* rule of judging concerning his fitness publicly to enter into covenant, and publicly to seal it. The man himself makes his judgment by looking into his own heart; but the church makes their judgment by looking only to what is visible; just as it is when men swear allegiance to the king, and renounce the pretender. The man who takes the oath of allegiance and

abjuration, sees his way clear to do so, by looking inward, and finding such a heart in him; but he who administers the oaths, judges concerning the propriety of his own conduct is so doing, only by what outwardly appears. And thus it is also when persons enter into the marriage covenant; they see their way clear to act, by looking, each one into his own heart, and finding such affections in themselves as are answerable to the external transaction before them; but he who leads them to enter into the marriage covenant, judges of the propriety of his conduct only by what is visible. A man, by looking into his own heart, may be certain, that he believes and loves the doctrines of the gospel; but the church, by outward appearances, can be certain of neither. Peter was certain he believed, (Matt. xvi. 16,) and as certain that he loved, (John xxi. 15—17;) and it is the duty of all to believe and love as he did; the blame is wholly in ourselves, if we do not. But we ought not to profess faith and love till we see our way clear; so as that in professing we may act an honest and conscientious part; even as it would be a wicked thing for persons to enter into the marriage covenant, if the prevailing judgment of their own minds were, that they were not in a proper state for such a transaction. However, it must be owned, that not to love Christ above all things, not to be willing to forsake all for his sake, and not to espouse his cause and interest heartily before men, is most inexcusable wickedness.

7. Therefore, we are to distinguish between things not at all commanded to any man; as eating blood: and things certainly commanded to some men; as to confess Christ before men. It is wrong to eat blood, if we at all doubt of the lawfulness of it, because it is not a commanded duty to any man. So, "He that doubteth is damned if he eat;" that is, is self-condemned, because, in such a case as this, he ought not to eat; but it will not hence follow, that we shall be self-condemned, if we confess Christ before men without full assurance; for by the command of Christ we are bound in duty, if we are on his side in our hearts, openly to confess him before men. If we neglect it, in this case we sin; and if we do it in hypocrisy, we sin. A man's conscience, in all such like cases, will lead him to act according to his prevailing judgment. It is, in fact, thus with the conscientious part of mankind, in all doubtful matters; if they are obliged to act one way or the other, they make conscience of acting according to prevailing evidence.

8. We are to distinguish between objections which appear to be equally against both schemes, and other objections; and are to look upon the former as of no weight to settle the

controversy. If they say, it is difficult to know whether we comply with the covenant of grace, we may answer, that it is as difficult, and more so, for any man to know whether he complies with the external covenant. If they say, the church cannot be certain that any man has saving grace, we may answer, neither can the church be certain that any man believes in his heart the doctrines which he professes with his mouth. If they say, assurance of our right to come is necessary on our scheme, we may answer, that it is no more necessary on one scheme than on the other. Besides, assurance of a right to come is attainable by true saints; but no man can know that he has a right on Mr. M.'s scheme, because no man can know what his external covenant requires. If they say, Peter had not time to examine into the gracious state of the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost, we may answer, that he had as much time for this, as to examine into their doctrinal knowledge and moral sincerity. So also, those objections ought to weigh nothing, which are taken merely from the wickedness of mankind, and which would vanish of themselves, should the Spirit of God be poured from on high, as it was when the first Christian church was set up. For there is no more reason that the discipline of Christ's house should be brought down to suit our corruptions, than that the doctrines of the gospel should also.

9. We ought to distinguish between an appeal to reason and an appeal to corruption. For example, these words are contained in the marriage covenant, unto which we oblige the woman to give her consent, namely, "You take this A. B. for your married husband, and promise to be a loving, faithful, and obedient wife to him," etc. Should a few women object against this covenant, and publicly propose an alteration, saying, "We pray, that the words, *loving, faithful, and obedient,* may be left out, for the sake of some young women of tender consciences, who cannot see their way clear to use them;" the only question would be this: "Ought the alteration to be made in the marriage covenant, or in the young women?" or, in other words, "Which is wrong, the woman's heart, or the covenant?" a question which may easily be decided, if we appeal to reason or to Scripture: but if we appeal to corruption, the more we wrangle, the more we may. Some might say, "If the covenant is not altered, no woman can be married without full assurance, for it is not lawful to enter into this covenant in doubt; for 'he that doubteth is damned;' an infallible assurance therefore is necessary. But who has this? Or what woman, on this plan, can be married, with a good conscience? And, besides, what minister can be able to judge whether any are fit to be

married? By what rule shall it be certainly known when a woman is really disposed to be a loving, faithful, and obedient wife, and when she is not? Moreover, it will only tempt bad women to make a lying profession, while women of tender consciences will be kept back; and those who are married will grow proud because they are judged to be qualified. Meanwhile, the failings of married women will be more taken notice of, to their dishonor, for using this covenant. Upon the whole, it is a very bad plan, and a thing of a very dangerous tendency; therefore we propose, that in all future times, these words, *loving, faithful, obedient*, be left out of the marriage covenant." How ridiculous would any woman make herself, that should advance such sentiments! But if this class of women were the majority, they might make a shocking noise; but there would be no more sense in it, than if but one single woman was in the scheme.

10. We are to distinguish between that character which the Israelites gave of themselves, when Mount Sinai was covered with a thick cloud, and the Lord appeared in the flame of a devouring fire on the top of the mount, and it lightened and thundered, and the voice of the trumpet was exceeding loud, and the people trembled under a sense of the greatness and majesty of the Holy One of Israel, and every one, even all the people, answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said, will we do; — such manifestations of God, and a people under such deep religious impressions, never had been before heard of since the world began; so that even God himself, judging according to appearances, was ready to say, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie," (Isai. lxiii. 8,) — and that character which they afterwards gave of themselves, by their conduct forty years in the wilderness. In the former, they appear heartily disposed to comply with God's covenant; in the latter, they appear a rebellious generation, whose hearts were not right with God, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. (Ps. lxxviii. 37.)

11. We are to distinguish between that character which the Israelites gave of themselves, by their conduct forty years in the wilderness, by which it appeared that they had not eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor a heart to understand, (for they made a calf even before the Mount of God, — and rebelled at Kadesh-barnea; and at Taberah, and Massah, and at Kibroth-hattavah, they provoked the Lord to wrath, so that Moses might well say, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you," (Deut. ix. 7—24,) and that character which that pious generation gave of themselves, who in the plains of

Moab heard Moses rehearse all God's ways to that nation, and their ways to God, forty years in the wilderness, and now, on a review of the whole, manifested a disposition unitedly to become God's people, to enter into God's covenant anew, and to bind themselves to him, as their God, to love him, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep all his commandments. Concerning the former character, more severe things are spoken in Scripture than of any other which that people ever gave of themselves under that dispensation; and concerning the latter, more good things. The piety of this new generation God remembered many ages after. Jer. ii. 2: "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals. Israel was holiness to the Lord." See also Judges ii. 7: "And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua;" so that they transmitred the true religion to the next generation, and kept it up all the days of their lives. And if these things are well considered, and the great comparative darkness of that age of the world, and the abundant pains which Moses took in the plains of Moab to explain the covenant, and to render them deeply sensible of their obligations to comply with it, with all their hearts, no man will find cause to say that Moses acted an unfaithful part, in leading that people to enter into that very covenant, in the manner he did.

Objection. "But it was the design of Moses to charge in a public manner, as what visibly and publicly appeared to be the truth of the case, those very individual persons with being unregenerate, on that very day, in which he led them to enter into covenant. For he says, 'The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' (Deut. xxix. 4.)"

Answer. It is evident, that in the public speech which Moses made to the Israelites in the plains of Moab, of which these words are a part, he constantly addresses them in their national capacity, and not as individuals. Thus in the paragraph in which these words are contained, (ver. 2,) "Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes, in the land of Egypt," etc.; whereas every one in the congregation, who were but one month under forty years of age, which was doubtless by far the greatest part of the congregation, never were in Egypt, for they were born in the wilderness, since their fathers left Egypt. And instances of the like nature are to be observed through the whole speech. Thus we know, that the carcasses of the men that sinned at Kadesh-barnea, on the return of the spies, were all of them

fallen in the wilderness; and yet he speaks to the present generation, who personally had no hand in that sin, as though they were the very individual persons that had committed it, (Deut. ix. 23,) "Then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord;" (see also Deut. i. 19—35;) whereas there was not one of those rebels alive; no, not so much as one. (Num. xxvi. 63—65.) And this is precisely the truth of the case, with the text under consideration; for Moses brought in no public charges against the nation, but for public crimes: not an instance can be produced from the beginning of Deuteronomy to the text under consideration. But this new generation, which were grown up, and which were now about to enter into covenant with God, had not been guilty of any public crimes, to give themselves a bad character. It does not appear from the whole story that Moses had any public grounds for a public charge against them, as being an ungodly generation; nay, the fact is, that they always behaved so well both before and after, that they were by God himself, after they were dead and gone, represented as a very religious and godly generation, (Jer. ii. 2, 3. Jude ii. 7;) compared to a choice vine, (Isa. v. 2;) wholly a right seed, (Jer. ii. 21.)

To suppose Moses charged them, in a public manner, as an unregenerate, ungodly generation, unjustly, without ever mentioning one single fact to the disadvantage of their character, is very unreasonable; especially as the sense before given to the words under consideration is an easy and natural sense, and removes all difficulties, and renders the speech and conduct of Moses perfectly consistent. For, as to all the instances of public conduct contained in the long narrative which Moses had given, from the time they left Egypt to that very day, which were evidences of blind eyes, deaf ears, and hard hearts, this present generation were not active in them. Those facts, those public crimes, although committed by that nation, were not done by the individual persons which made up the present congregation, who entered into covenant with God; but by the old generation, whose carcasses were fallen in the wilderness; as any man may see that will read all the preceding chapters of the book. We ought not, by giving a wrong sense to the words of Moses, to render his public speech and his public conduct inconsistent; and then to charge him with acting a dishonest part in leading that people to enter into covenant, in the manner in which in fact he did; or to deny the fact, under a pretence of saving his character; when indeed his character cannot be saved this way, because the fact is undeniably true.

If it should be inquired, Why did Moses speak thus to this

present generation, as they had not been personally guilty of that course of rebellious conduct themselves, but were themselves a godly generation? the answer is easy. He did it to give them a clear view and humbling sense of their national sins, and the justice of God in the national judgments which he brought upon them; that they might know, that it was not for their righteousness that God did bring them into that good land; but merely of his great goodness, and because he had promised it to Abraham, (Deut. ix. 5;) to the end they might so reflect on the depravity of their own hearts, and be so deeply abased before God, as to be thereby prepared for that holy and solemn transaction before them, of entering into covenant with the Holy One of Israel; that having in view how their fathers had entered into covenant at Sinai, and had broken covenant, so that all their carcasses had fallen in the wilderness, they might take warning thereby, and remember and keep the covenant of the Lord their God, that it might be well with them, and with their children after them.

12. We are to distinguish between the character which the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost gave of themselves, in that deep conviction of sin and guilt which they manifested, when they appeared to be pricked at the heart, and in that repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, which they openly professed when they appeared cordially to comply with Peter's exhortation, — "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins," — by gladly receiving his word, and offering themselves to baptism, and to join with a persecuted party, whose Master had lately been put to a most shameful and scandalous death, in the most public manner, on the most public occasion, at the risk of every thing dear to them in the world; and the character which men ordinarily give of themselves in offering to join with the church, without any special concern about their souls, when it is esteemed no small honor to be church members, and enjoy church privileges. The former, to a judgment of charity, appeared to be true converts, whatever may be thought of the latter.

13. We are to distinguish between what is visible and what is real. Many in the eyes of men are reputed godly, who in the eyes of God, as searcher of hearts, are not so. The former have a right, in the sight of the church, to enter into the covenant of grace, in a public profession, and to seal the covenant; but the latter only have a right in the sight of God; for the former appear to be godly; but the latter only are really so: the former have a visible, the latter have a real right.

14. There is a distinction to be made between a right to sealing ordinances on our own account, and a right on the account of another. Thus pious parents have a right for sealing ordinances for themselves, on their own account, as being themselves really in covenant with God, by a compliance with it; but their infant children have a right to baptism, not on their own account, but simply on that of their parents, considered as parts of their parents, branches grown out of the old root; and so may be baptized without respect to any internal qualification, at present inherent in them, either moral or gracious.

Obj. If, in infant baptism, no respect is had to any internal qualification in the infant, then the seal is set to a blank.

Ans. Then the seal is set to a blank, when there is no covenant entered into; but when there is a covenant entered into and sealed, there is no room for the objection. But in infant baptism there is a covenant entered into; for God says to the pious parent, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed;" and the pious parent replies, "I choose thee for my God and the God of my child." So that here is a covenant entered into between God and the pious parent, in behalf of himself and his infant, in the very act of offering it to God in baptism. And baptism is a seal, not to a blank, but to this covenant, which in fact takes place between God and the pious parent.

15. We are to distinguish between covenanting with God actively, in a visible manner, as a pious parent does when he dedicates his child to God in baptism, and promises to bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and being laid under the bonds of the covenant passively, as is the case with the child. God speaks to the pious parent in that ordinance, saying, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed; that is, if they will take heed to walk in my ways." The pious parent answers, in the act of offering the child to baptism, "I choose thee for my God, and for the God of my child; and I promise to bring up my child for thee; and O that it might live in thy sight, be thy child, and walk in thy ways." The parent is active; but the child is merely passive. We may bring ourselves under the bonds of the covenant, by our own act and deed, as the adult did in the plains of Moab, when they renewed covenant there; or we may be brought under the bonds of the covenant, by the act of another authorized by God so to do. Thus Moses laid all the infants in the congregation, in the plains of Moab, under the bonds of the covenant; and thus parents, in offering their children to baptism, lay them under the bonds of the covenant.

16. If no one is to be baptized, till by his own act and deed he enters into covenant with God, be it the covenant of grace or a graceless covenant, then no infant is to be baptized on either plan; because no infant, by his own act and deed, enters into any covenant of any sort, or so much as knows, that there is any covenant of any sort to be entered into. If the child has a right to baptism, on its parents' account, and not on its own, infant baptism can be vindicated, as well on the plan of a gracious covenant, as on the plan of an ungracious one; but if the child's right to baptism is founded on its own personal compliance with the covenant, infant baptism must be given up on the plan of a covenant of moral sincerity, and a right doctrinal belief; for no infant was ever thus qualified: but some infants have been sanctified from the womb, and so, in this sense, have been in the covenant of grace. (Luke i. 15.)

17. It must apparently be an unspeakable advantage to be under the watch and care of a godly church, who have a real spirit of fidelity in them; and, like Abraham, will command all under their care to fear the Lord. (Gen. xviii. 19.) And it is equally evident, that it can be of no advantage to be under the watch and care of an ungodly church, who will neither walk in the ways of God themselves, nor bring up those committed to their care for God. God put confidence in Abraham —"I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him;" but there is no confidence to be put in an ungodly man, that he will be faithful to God, with respect to his own soul, or the souls of his children. (Hos. vi. 4. Matt. vii. 16—18.)

SECTION VIII.

MR. MATHER'S SCHEME INCONSISTENT WITH ITSELF.

THERE are three things in Mr. M.'s external covenant, namely, the conditions required; the privileges promised; and the seals; and his ideas concerning each of these, as expressed in his book, are inconsistent.

I. As to the conditions required, in order to a covenant right to all covenant privileges, his ideas are inconsistent.

1. Sometimes he makes circumcision the only condition. "For that by which," says he, "any one was to enter into this covenant, was an external mark in the flesh. This is my

covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised; but that by which any one enters into the covenant of grace, is the circumcision of the heart."* So that the circumcision of the flesh brings men into the external covenant, and gives them a covenant right to all its privileges; just as the circumcision of the heart brings men into the covenant of grace, and gives them a covenant right to all the blessings of that. But the circumcision of the heart, as the phrase is used in Scripture, is a real compliance with the covenant of grace, and is connected with eternal life. (Rom. ii. 29.) And accordingly, he speaks of the circumcision of the flesh as a compliance with the external covenant. "This covenant remained to be complied with; Abraham must needs be circumcised."

And indeed, if Mr. M. was disposed to turn the covenant with Abraham into his external covenant, of necessity the circumcision of the flesh must be the only condition of it; because there was nothing else external which took place in that covenant recorded in Gen. xvii., to which Mr. M. could with any color lay claim; for Abraham made no profession but a profession of saving faith. But this was a visible compliance with the covenant of grace, and not with the external covenant; if, therefore, he did any thing at all by way of compliance with Mr. M.'s external covenant, it was only merely and simply making "an external mark in the flesh."

2. And as Mr. M. thus sometimes represents the circumcision of the flesh to be a compliance with the external covenant with Abraham, so he sometimes represents baptism as entitling to all the privileges of his external covenant, under the gospel dispensation; for, according to him, all who are baptized "are Abraham's children, and heirs according to the promise." "For a child baptized in infancy," he says, "is thereby as really brought into covenant, as one that is baptized in riper years; it conveys the same privileges to the one as to

* "*That by which any one enters into the covenant of grace is the circumcision of the heart.*" And yet he is obliged to deny this, (p. 21;) and to affirm that the circumcision of the heart intends no more than entering into his external, graceless covenant, in order to get rid of that plain text, (Ezek. xliv. 9,) "Thus saith the Lord God, No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, etc., shall enter into my sanctuary;" which is a prophecy of the glorious state of the church spoken of in Isai. ii. 3, 4, 5; xi. 1—9; lx. 21; when Satan will be bound, agreeable to Rev. xx., and when Mr. M.'s external covenant will be no more practised upon in the whole earth for a thousand years. For in that day, "Thus saith the Lord God, No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, shall enter into my sanctuary;" that is, none shall be admitted but such who, in their profession, life, and conversation, appear to be godly. For in that day right doctrine and right discipline will universally take place, and then all will be agreed; "for they shall see eye to eye." (Isai. lii. 8.)

the other." But the adult, having made a profession, was, in the apostolic age, by baptism received into full communion with the church, in complete standing, as is evident from Acts ii. 37—47. And in this view Mr. M. considers infant baptism, as "a valuable privilege; as it entitles to the appointed means of grace;" that is, to all church privileges; and insists, that those who are baptized in infancy "should be told that they are really in covenant with God; that they are members of the visible church, and are entitled to the privileges of it." And as they have a title to the privileges, so "they are in duty bound to seek the enjoyment of, and attend upon, these privileges." For, according to Mr. M., "a child dedicated to God in baptism, is thereby brought into covenant with God, and has a promise left to it of the means of grace, and the strivings of God's Holy Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation; but an unbaptized child is left in the kingdom of darkness." And he adds, "It is but trifling to say, that although baptized persons may be styled members of the church universal, yet they are not members of any particular church." So that, upon the whole, it appears, that by baptism alone, infants are made members of the church, in such sort, as to have a divine right and title to all church privileges; which is full as much as can be said of any, who are in full communion, in complete standing. And thus we see what Mr. M.'s scheme is, in this view of it. And here let us stop a moment or two, and look round and consider where we are now; for if these things are true, it will follow, —

1. That no internal mental qualifications are now, or ever were, requisite, in order to a right to all church privileges in the sight of God; neither moral nor gracious; neither faith, nor practice of one sort, or of the other; no, nothing at all, but only "an external mark in the flesh," or water baptism.*

* The land of Canaan was one chief external blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. (Gen. xvii. 8.) A compliance with that covenant gave a covenant right to a possession of it. (Num. xxxii. 11, 12.) The Israelites who came out of Egypt were all circumcised. (Josh. v. 5.) If, in circumcision, they fully complied with that covenant on their part, then their carcasses did not fall in the wilderness because they on their part broke covenant, but because God broke covenant on his part. They on their part fulfilled the only condition on which the land of Canaan was promised, but God was not true to the covenant on his part; so the fault was not in them, but in him; and in this view, Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii. are entirely inconsistent with the Abrahamic covenant; and so also is the divine conduct in the expulsion of the Jews out of the land of Canaan by Nebuchadnezzar, formerly, as well as in their present dispersion; for they on their part have always kept covenant; for they have always circumcised their children, from the time they took possession of the land of Canaan to this day; nor can Ps. i. 16, Isai. i. 10—15, Ezek. xliv. 9, Matt. v. 23, 24, Heb. iii. 19, and a hundred other texts, be reconciled with this scheme.

And if baptism alone, without respect to any mental qualification, gives a

2. And therefore, in order to our being satisfied in our own consciences, that we have a right in the sight of God to come to the Lord's table, we are not "to examine ourselves of our knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of our faith to feed upon him, of our repentance, love, and new obedience," as the Assembly of divines imagined a hundred and twenty years ago; nor are we to examine ourselves of our doctrinal knowledge, orthodoxy, moral sincerity, or of any thing else, of an internal, mental nature; for a right to the Lord's supper has no dependence on any thing of this nature. For but one thing was needful to satisfy the conscience of the Jew, namely, "the external mark in the flesh," which might easily be known. And the Christian has nothing to do but to procure, and keep by him, a well-attested certificate of his baptism, to give him a full assurance of his right to come to the Lord's table.

3. For no crime, although of the most scandalous nature, could vacate this right in the sight of God, or in the sight of conscience; because this right was not founded in any moral qualifications whatsoever, but only in "an external mark in the flesh," or water baptism. But the idolatry of the Jew did not at all take away "the external mark in the flesh;" nor can the open infidelity and debauchery of the Christian prove, that the certificate which he has of his baptism is not authentic. Let the idolatrous Jew look on "the external mark in the flesh," and let the infidel and immoral Christian look on his certificate, and their consciences may be confirmed, in a full assurance of their divine right and title to all covenant privileges.*

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covenant right to all the external privileges of the visible church of Christ, then no consistent meaning can be given to these texts, Matt. xviii. 17, xxii. 12, Cor. v. 11, xi. 28, 29, Tit. iii. 10, 11, Rev. ii. 4, 5. etc. The truth is, by sealing a covenant we are bound to fulfil it; but it is an actual compliance with a covenant, that entitles us to its blessings. (Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii. Rom. viii. 13. Matt. iii. 9, 10.)

* This is a short and easy method for dishonest, cheating, promise-breaking professors to come to the Lord's table with a good conscience; and for those who live in the neglect of family prayer, and who, instead of bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, train them up to live after the flesh in chambering and wantonness; while they themselves live in malice and envy towards their fellow-professors. Mr. M. is of opinion, that it is of very bad and dangerous tendency, for those who are admitted into the church to make a profession of godliness, lest by their ungodly lives they should disgrace their profession, and tempt others to turn infidels. (p. 53, 54.) And for the same reason, it is not best that any of the professed followers of Christ should pretend to be honest men, lest their dishonest practices should sink the holy religion of Christ into contempt, and promote infidelity in the world; and indeed it is come to this already, that, among the Mahometans, it is a common thing, when men are charged with cheating or suspected of any dishonest trick, to reply with indignation, "What! do you think I am a Christian?"

Nor can it be justified, in Mr. M.'s way of reasoning, for the church to require a profession of moral honesty of those whom they admit to full communion; for

4. Therefore no public profession of any kind, nor freedom from public scandal, are necessary in order to a visible right to all church privileges, in the sight of men. For, if our real right, in the sight of God, does not depend on any internal qualification, either moral or gracious, no pretence need to be made to any such qualification, in order to a visible right. The Jew had nothing to do, in order to prove his right, but only to make it appear that he had been circumcised; and the Christian has nothing to do, in order to prove his right, but only to make it appear that he has been baptized. Nor can the church consistently demand any thing further, on Mr. M.'s scheme; for what he says is the plain simple truth — "To require more of the person to be admitted into the church, than is made necessary by the covenant on which it is framed, is really absurd." But if all these things are true, then it will follow, —

1. That Mr. M. is inconsistent with himself, in putting an "outward profession" along with "an external covenant relation," as he does, and for saying, as he does, "I will allow that none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will endeavor to conform his practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church;" and for asserting, that "the disorderly and vicious should be debarred." For, if baptism alone is all that is necessary to a covenant right to all church privileges, then baptism alone is all that ought to be required in order to an admission into the church; nor is a public profession, or freedom from public scandal, at all requisite. If baptism alone gives a covenant right to all church privileges; if there is "a promise

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every one of his objections against a profession of godliness are of full force against a profession of a disposition honestly to pay our debts, and act up to our word and promise in our dealings with our fellow-men. For, 1. Such an honest disposition is an invisible qualification, and we cannot be certain that men have it in their hearts; and therefore on this plan there can be no visible church. (p. 48.) 2. Besides, according to this, the design of God must have been to have made a visible distinction between honest and dishonest men. But this is contrary to Scripture, which represents the visible church like a net which catches all sorts, good and bad. (p. 49, 50.) 3. Admission to full communion on this plan will do hurt to men's souls, tend to make them think they are honest when they are not, and to blow up pride in their hearts, and to make them say with the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, I am not as others are, extortioners, unjust, etc. (p. 52, 53.) 4. And it will tend greatly to wound religion, when afterwards they neglect to do as they say, and are not honest to pay their debts. (p. 54.) 5. Besides, this scheme makes infant baptism a mere nullity; for if moral honesty is a necessary qualification for sealing ordinances, then infants cannot receive the seal; for the church can have no positive evidence that they have an honest disposition. The Anabaptists, therefore, are right in rejecting the baptism of infants. (p. 54.)

These are Mr. M.'s "most weighty and material objections, an answer to which he has never yet seen attempted." But it so happens, that they are of equal weight against himself, unless he will say, that moral honesty is not a qualification necessary for church membership.

left" by God to those who have this; no man, nor any number of men under heaven, have a right to require any thing else; so that, to insist that "none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will endeavor to conform his practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church;" and that "disorderly and vicious persons ought to be debarred;" "and to keep such back from enjoying the privileges and means appointed for the good of their souls," is a very strange affair; and, therefore, to use Mr. M.'s own words, and to apply them to his own conscience, "I would request such as have thought and acted upon this scheme, impartially to examine what I have offered. It is surely no small matter to shut the kingdom of heaven, as the visible church is often called, against men, and not to suffer such to enter as would." A horrid crime, indeed! and yet the very crime of which Mr. M. stands publicly convicted out of his mouth; for he shuts the kingdom of heaven against all baptized persons, and will not admit one of them into the church, "but such as profess the Christian religion, and endeavor to conform their practice to the rules of it;" although, according to his own scheme, they are as much in the church as he is, and have as good a right to all church privileges as himself.

2. Therefore Mr. M. may be publicly called to an account, and admonished out of his own mouth, in his own words, for making infant baptism "a mere nullity, a thing of nought." "And what is a baptized infant to be accounted of? Is he a member of the visible church, or is he not?" (p. 54;) and be rebuked for his conduct, for practically "representing and treating such as are baptized, as if they were not really in covenant," (p. 56,) by refusing to admit them to covenant privileges without a profession, when, according to his own scheme, he ought to tell all baptized persons, that "they are really in covenant with God; that they are members of the visible church; and are entitled to the privileges of it," (p. 55, 56,) merely by their baptism, without any profession at all, and without any endeavors at all, even all of them, "old and young, moral and immoral." (p. 42.)

3. For to say, that "the disorderly and vicious ought to be debarred," and so "to require more than is made necessary by the covenant, on which the church is framed, is really absurd; for if baptism gives a covenant right to the Lord's supper, nothing else is necessary.

4. To say, that "the disorderly and vicious ought to be debarred" by the church, is to say implicitly, that such ought to debar themselves; their own consciences ought to pronounce sentence upon them. But what if a man's conscience should

happen to be convinced of this plain Scripture truth, that to rise in rebellion against the great God, is one of the most "disorderly" things a creature can be guilty of; and that to continue obstinate in this rebellion, after all the external means which God has used to reclaim us, is one of the most "vicious"? Must not his own conscience debar him on Mr. M.'s scheme? Or will it do to tell such a man, "Had you been guilty of stealing but five shillings from one of your neighbors, for this sin, if considered only as against man, your conscience ought to have debarred you, until you had come to repentance and made restitution; but your conscience ought not to debar you for being an obstinate, impenitent rebel against the God of heaven, the great Sovereign of the universe"? Or might we not, for telling a man thus, be in danger of that rebuke in Mark xxiii. 24, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel?" For to rise in rebellion against an earthly prince, would be esteemed more "disorderly and vicious" than barely to steal five shillings from our neighbor; and to rise in rebellion against the great God is doubtless more "disorderly and vicious" than to rise in rebellion against an earthly monarch. In a word, if baptism alone does not entitle to all church privileges both "young and old, moral and immoral," without respect to any mental qualification whatsoever, it will not be easy to find a place where a man may set his foot down and be consistent with himself, unless we return back to the good old way, to the apostolic plan, according to which, not baptism, but saving faith, is considered as the condition of the covenant, and that which entitles to all its blessings. (Gal. iii. 26, 29.) "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Mr. M. says, (p. 42,) "As to baptized children, I allow they have a right to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but not a right of immediate possession, according to the apostle's representation in Gal. iv. 12: 'Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father.'" But the child, though ever so young, eats bread at his father's table, and no one disputes his right. And when the child is of age, and his father is dead, and the estate is to be divided among the heirs, the child has nothing to do in order to prove his right to a share in his father's estate, but to bring a certificate from the town clerk, in order to prove from the town records, that he is the child of the deceased. Nor is such a child obliged to make any profession, or to enter

into any covenant before the Court of Probate, in order to come to a possession of his right. The law gives him his right without any such prerequisites; for his right is not founded upon any thing of such a nature, but simply upon his being the child of such a father. This, therefore, is the only point to be proved; and just the same, to be consistent, must be the case on Mr. M.'s plan. The only point which one who was baptized in infancy, has to prove, when he becomes adult, in order to take possession of his right, is, that he was baptized. Let him, therefore, produce a well-attested certificate of this, and nothing further can be demanded.

If it should be said, that all that Mr. M. means is, that baptism gives a conditional right to the Lord's table, that is, a right upon condition of a profession of religion and freedom from scandal, — it may be replied, that the unbaptized have a right to sealing ordinances upon these conditions, according to Mr. M.'s own scheme, and therefore this cannot be his meaning; for this, to use his own words, would be to make baptism "a mere nullity, a thing of nought." But this brings us, in the next place, to observe, —

II. That Mr. M.'s ideas of the peculiar privileges of his external covenant are also inconsistent. For if it should be inquired, What advantage hath Mr. M.'s graceless covenanter, or what profit is there in baptism administered upon a graceless covenant, — he has no right, upon his scheme, to the apostle's answer in Rom. iii. 1, 2 — "Much every way," etc.

1. For, as to the oracles of God, which he claims for one of the chief privileges of his external covenant, he will grant, that they are common to the unbaptized; that is, the unbaptized have as good a right to read and hear the word of God as the baptized have; and as good a right to believe and embrace the gospel; for, by Christ's last commission, the gospel is to be preached to all nations, to the uncircumcised Greek as well as to the circumcised Jew; yea, to *every creature;* and that previous to, and in order to prepare men for baptism, (Mark xvi. 15, 16,) — so that there is not the least need of being in his external covenant in order to have as good a right to hear and believe, and be justified by the gospel, as any man on earth has; for there is no difference. (Rom. iii. 22: compare Matt. x. 5, 6; xxviii. 19.)

2. As to sealing ordinances, he is full in it, that baptism alone gives no right to them, for ourselves, or for our children, which can be enjoyed without a profession of the Christian religion, and freedom from scandal; and one who never was baptized, may, on his scheme, be admitted to sealing ordinances

for himself and his children, upon the same terms; no higher, nor lower, being required; so that there is no advantage, in this respect, in being in his external covenant.

3. As to the influences of the Spirit, whereby the means of grace are rendered effectual to the salvation of sinners, he holds, that no unconverted man has a covenant right to them; but that God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and has been at the pains to publish a labored sermon on the subject, to prove the point, and to answer objections; which was printed but six years ago; and if this be true, the baptized cannot claim a covenant right to these influences of the Spirit, any more than the unbaptized; and therefore, although in the book now under consideration, he says, "A child dedicated to God in baptism is thereby brought into covenant with God, and has a promise left to it of the means of grace, and the strivings of the Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation; but an unbaptized child is left in the kingdom of darkness;" yet it is true, on his own scheme, that such a baptized child, while in a Christless state, is under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, a child of the devil, and an heir of hell, and is dependent on God's sovereign mercy, as really as any other child. Yea, he declares, in his Sermon on Divine Sovereignty, that "sometimes those who to an eye of reason are the most likely to partake of the blessings of the gospel, are passed by; and others, of whom we have little or no hope, are recovered by sovereign grace, and enriched with saving mercy. Thus we should have thought Judas, who was one of Christ's disciples, and his constant follower, was more likely to obtain the blessing of saving mercy than Saul, who was a fierce, zealous, and open enemy to Christ; but we see God ordered it otherwise;" and he adds, "This was not a thing peculiar to that generation; but it is the sovereign grace of God, by which any one, at any time, is brought to obey the truth to the saving of his soul."

4. As to the advantage of church discipline, Mr. M. grants, what every body knows to be too true, that the baptized are taken no more care of, generally, than the unbaptized. Nor will it mend the matter, if we should all embrace Mr. M.'s scheme, and fill up our churches more and more with ungodly men; for gospel discipline never was, and never will be, maintained by ungospel churches; for so long as men are themselves at heart enemies to the religion of Christ, its doctrines and duties, they will not themselves be cordially subject to its doctrines and duties; much less join heartily to bring others to be in subjection to them; as it is written, "Do men gather

grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit."

III. Nor are his ideas of the seals of the covenant any more consistent; for his notion of a seal is, that it is a rite of confirmation, whereby, in a mutual covenant, both parties bind themselves to comply with the covenant contained in the written instrument. But he grants, that in the written instrument, in the present case, the covenant of grace is contained, and is the principal thing; and yet, by sealing this instrument, we do not pretend to a compliance with the covenant of grace in our own consciences, or profess any such thing before the world; nay, we do not profess to have, in the lowest degree, a heart to comply with it, nor mean that the act of sealing should have this import; although in all other matters, except those of religion, this is what is meant by sealing. But instead of a compliance with the covenant of grace, which is the principal thing, according to him, contained in the written instrument, we only profess a compliance with his graceless covenant, and bind ourselves to such religious exercises and endeavors, as are consistent with a total rejection of the covenant of grace in our heart; even such a total rejection, as God threatens with eternal damnation. But of this we have spoken before, Sect. V. Thus inconsistent are Mr. M.'s notions of his external covenant, its conditions, its peculiar privileges, and its seals.

To mention but one inconsistence more in Mr. M.'s scheme: The external covenant is, according to him, the appointed means; and saving faith and conversion, or a compliance with the covenant of grace, is the end. And yet he says, "Although a person was in a state of grace, and consequently included in the covenant of grace, yet this covenant remained to be complied with; Abraham was a true believer before, yet he must needs be circumcised." But if Abraham was converted and justified before he was circumcised, then circumcision was not instituted as a means of his conversion, or as a prerequisite to his justification. Mr. M. adds, that his external, graceless covenant is also to be a means "to train up believers in holiness;" that is, holy Abraham, instead of those holy exercises in which he had lived above twenty years, even ever since he began a holy life, was in (Gen. xvii.) by God Almighty laid under covenant bonds, to enter into a course of unholy religious exercises, such as take place in impenitent, self-righteous sinners, to the end that he might "be trained up in holiness." Gal. iii. 3: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now

made perfect by the flesh?" Besides, that believers should be under the bonds of two covenants, of a nature as contrary and inconsistent as sin and holiness, is what cannot be rendered consistent. And to say, that this external covenant is neither sinful nor holy, is either to say, that there is a whole system of religious exercises of heart, which are neither conformable nor unconformable with the holy law of God; which is to deny, that the law of God is a universal rule of life, contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, (Gal. iii. 10. Matt. xxii. 37—40. 1 Cor. x. 31;) or, which is equally absurd, to say, that no exercise of heart is required in his external covenant; nothing but bodily motions, unconnected with the heart. Indeed, the very notion of two rules of duty, a holy, and an unholy one, which is essential to his notion of two covenants, is an inconsistence; for two contrary laws, instead of binding both at once, must mutually destroy each other, and can neither of them bind to any thing. That law which is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, requires sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation. (Compare Gal. iii. 24, with verse 10.)

And thus I have finished the remarks which I designed to make on Mr. Mather's book. There are other things contained in it equally exceptionable; but if his external covenant, which is the foundation of his whole scheme, is proved to be an unscriptural and inconsistent thing, his whole scheme is sufficiently confuted. Besides, while the whole controversy is reduced to one single point, the common people will be under better advantages to make a judgment for themselves. But now, the only point which the reader has to determine, in order to settle the whole controversy in his own mind, is this, namely, *Are baptism and the Lord's supper seals of the covenant of grace, or of a graceless covenant?*

To conclude: Let it be remembered, that "the Westminster Confession of Faith," which is adopted by the church of Scotland, "and the Savoy Confession of Faith," which is adopted by the churches in Massachusetts and in Connecticut, declare that "sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace." And let it be remembered, that these confessions of faith know nothing of Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant, either name or thing. And let it also be remembered, that "the heads of agreement" which were assented to in England in the last century, by those called Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and which are adopted by the churches in Connecticut, declare, "that none shall be admitted as members, in order to communion in all the special ordinances of the gospel, but such persons as are knowing and sound in the funda-

mental doctrine of the Christian religion; without scandal in their lives; and to a judgment regulated by the word of God, are persons of visible holiness and honesty, credibly professing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ." (Ezek. xliv. 9. Rom. x. 10.) And further, let it be remembered, that this is the plan on which these churches are professedly founded; for the general council at Saybrook, A. D. 1708, came unanimously into this result, namely, "As we assent to the foregoing heads of agreement, so we unanimously resolve, as the Lord shall enable us, to practise according to them."

Now, the question is, whether this plan is agreeable to the word of God, or not; for we are all agreed, that the word of God is the only standard by which all creeds and confessions of human composure are to be tried. Mr. Mather has offered what he thought proper on the one side, and I have offered what to me appears needful on the other; and now it belongs to every reader to judge for himself.

And now, therefore, O reader, as this grand and important question, in which thy soul is deeply interested, as well as the souls of many thousands of others, is referred to thee, that thou mayst make a judgment for thyself, so I entreat thee, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, who are spectators in this controversy, to set aside all carnal affections and worldly considerations, and to view the whole in the light of God's holy word, and to make up a judgment for thyself, as in the presence of God, and with the same uprightness and impartiality, as though the last trumpet was to sound on the morrow, concerning this question, namely, *Whether baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, or of a graceless covenant?* for on this single point turns the whole controversy. And now, may God Almighty, the Father of lights, grant unto thee a discerning mind and a sound judgment, of his infinite mercy, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

A CAREFUL AND STRICT EXAMINATION

OF THE

EXTERNAL COVENANT,

AND OF THE PRINCIPLES BY WHICH IT IS SUPPORTED:

A REPLY

TO THE REV. MR. MOSES MATHER'S PIECE, ENTITLED

"THE VISIBLE CHURCH IN COVENANT WITH GOD, FURTHER ILLUSTRATED," &c.

A VINDICATION

OF THE PLAN ON WHICH THE CHURCHES IN NEW ENGLAND WERE ORIGINALLY FORMED.

INTERSPERSED WITH REMARKS UPON SOME THINGS ADVANCED BY MR. SANDEMAN, ON SOME OF THE IMPORTANT POINTS IN DEBATE.

"I DO NOT MENTION THE ADMINISTRATION OF SACRAMENTS UPON THIS OCCASION BECAUSE, THOUGH THEY HAVE SO NOBLE AND EFFECTUAL A TENDENCY TO IMPROVE MEN'S MINDS IN PIETY, AND TO PROMOTE CHRISTIAN EDIFICATION, YET I DO NOT REMEMBER TO HAVE HEARD OF ANY INSTANCE IN WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN THE MEANS OF MEN'S CONVERSION; WHICH IS THE LESS TO BE WONDERED AT, AS THEY ARE APPOINTED FOR A VERY DIFFERENT END."

Dr. Doddridge's Sermon on Regeneration.

PREFACE.

THE design of my writing on the sacramental controversy has been, to vindicate the plan on which the churches in New England were originally formed, when this country was first settled by our forefathers. And in order to this, I have had it in my view to prove these three propositions, namely: —

I. That those who are qualified to offer their children in baptism, are equally qualified to come to the Lord's table; and that therefore the half-way practice, which has so much prevailed of late in the country, is unscriptural.

II. That baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace; and that, therefore, those who know they have no grace, cannot be active in sealing of it, consistently with honesty and a good conscience.

III. That there is no graceless covenant between God and man existing, suited to the state and temper of graceless men, a compliance with which they might, as such, consistently profess and seal; and that, therefore, there is no door open for graceless men, as such, to enter into covenant with God. I say, I have had it in my view to prove, —

1. That those who are qualified to offer their children in baptism, are equally qualified to come to the Lord's table; and that, therefore, the half-way, practice which of late has so much prevailed in the country, is unscriptural. And this point, theoretically considered, seems to be settled. With respect to this, Mr. Mather, in his book entitled "The Visible Church in Covenant with God further illustrated," etc., says, "As to the half-way practice, I am in it, but not for it. I have no disposition to oppose the doctor in his endeavoring to break up that

unscriptural practice." And since those ministers who are in this practice, do grant it to be *unscriptural*, which, so far as I know, all of them do, nothing now remains but to put them in mind, that "the second commandment requireth the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word." And the commission of our Lord and Master obligeth us to teach his disciples to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded them. And how unkind must it be in the people, to necessitate their ministers to counteract their own consciences, by continuing in an unscriptural practice, in condescension to their ignorant, unscriptural notions! But much more unkind still must it be in clergymen who know the practice to be unscriptural, to lift up their voices on high, and raise a popular clamor against those ministers who, at no small risk, venture to lay aside the practice, that they may approve themselves to God and to their own consciences. But it may be said, to Mr. Mather's honor, that he is not of the number of those who act so unkind a part to honest men.*

* Our forefathers began to settle in New England in 1620, without the half-way practice. It was brought in 1662, forty years after, when the first generation were generally dead, by a synod at Boston. This synod professed to believe that none had a right to the seals for themselves, or their children, but true believers and real saints; however, they thought a less degree of grace would qualify for one ordinance than for the other; and on this principle the half-way practice was introduced. The principle they acted upon is now given up. We are all agreed, that he who is qualified to offer his children in baptism, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table; and so we are all agreed, that the half-way practice is unscriptural. Some feel themselves bound in conscience to make the Scripture their only rule of faith and practice; others do not think themselves bound. On this point let the following texts be consulted: Deut. iv. 2. Matt. v. 19. Luke vi. 46; xxii. 19. James ii. 10. Matt. xxviii. 20; xv. 6. Besides, we, who are ministers, may do well to consider, that although our congregations, while secure in sin, may be well pleased with an unscriptural practice, and with us for continuing in it against the light of our own consciences, yet, if they should ever be awakened out of their carnal security, if they should ever be converted, our conduct might stand in a shocking point of light, in the view of their consciences. And yet, from Sabbath to Sabbath, we pray that the Spirit of God may be poured out, and that sinners may be convinced and converted. This affair doubtless gives pain to many a heart. What a pity it is, that the clergy have not a heart to unite in what they know to be the true scriptural practice! The honor of Christ and of Christianity are interested in this matter It ought to be attended to with the utmost seriousness and honesty.

2. Another point I undertook to prove was this, namely, That baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace. This was one chief point I had in view in my answer to Mr. M.'s former book on this controversy; and this point also Mr. M. expressly grants me in his second book. (p. 58.) Speaking of the covenant with Abraham, he says, "The covenant of grace was evidently and confessedly contained, set forth, and confirmed, by the particular appointment of circumcision." But if baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, how can those who knowingly reject the covenant of grace in their hearts, seal it with their hands, consistently with honesty and a good conscience? Here it may not be amiss to repeat some of the articles of the creed published in my fourth Dialogue, that the reader may judge for himself whether they are true or not: "I believe that any man, who seals any covenant, doth, in and by the act of sealing, declare his compliance with that covenant which he seals; because this is the import of the act of sealing. I believe that it is of the nature of lying, to seal a covenant, with which I do not now, and never did, comply in my heart, but rather habitually and constantly reject. Therefore I believe that a man who knows he has no grace, cannot seal the covenant of grace honestly and with a good conscience." It belongs to Mr. Mather, if he means to maintain, that those who know they have no grace, can seal the covenant of grace honestly and with a good conscience, to say how; for as yet he has said nothing on this point. And indeed, we must either give up the import of sealing, or give up the covenant of grace, as the covenant to be sealed; or say that graceless men have some grace, and do, in a measure, truly and really comply with the covenant of grace, and so have really a title to pardon and eternal life, or we cannot be consistent; nor then neither. For to say, that graceless men have some grace, is a contradiction. And to say they have no grace, and yet may honestly seal the covenant of grace, is to deny the import of sealing; for sealing a covenant always denotes a present consent of heart to the covenant sealed; and, therefore, to seal a covenant which I reject with

my whole heart, is a practical falsehood. But if I do not reject it with my whole heart, I have a degree of true love to it; that is, I have a degree of true grace; and so am in a pardoned and justified state. But still it remains true, that those who know they have no grace, cannot seal the covenant of grace with a good conscience, because it is a practical falsehood. Indeed, men may be so far gone in wickedness, as to allow themselves in lying to God and man; but their conduct cannot be justified, when, with the assembled universe, they appear before the bar of God. For as has been said, sealing a covenant always denotes a present consent of heart to the covenant sealed. In this sense it has always been understood by mankind in their covenants between one another in deeds, in bonds, etc. Sealing denotes a present consent of heart to the contents of the written instrument; and therefore no honest man will seal the written instrument until in heart he consents to the contents of it. And should any man seal a written instrument, and at the same time declare before evidences that at present he did not consent to it, it was not his free act and deed, the act of sealing would in its own nature be of no significance. The whole transaction would be perfect trifling. Mr. M. says, "I am very sensible, that the Christian church has always esteemed sealing ordinances as seals of the covenant of grace. On God's part, they are seals to the truth of the whole revealed will of God. On our part, they are seals binding us to pay a due regard to the whole revelation; and accordingly, any breach of moral rule or gospel precept has been esteemed by the church as a breach of covenant in its members." He, therefore, who is, habitually, totally destitute of that holiness which the law of God requires, and of that repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, to which in the gospel we are invited, and lives in a total neglect of that religion which flows from the love, repentance, and faith required in the law and gospel; even he does not consent to the covenant of grace in his heart, in the least degree, but lives habitually, totally, and universally, in the breach of it, without ever complying with it in one single act. And can a man, conscious to himself that

this is his character, with a good conscience seal this covenant, or can a Christian church allow of such hypocrisy?

3. The other point which I designed to prove was this: that there is no graceless covenant between God and man existing; that is, no covenant in which God promises religious privileges and spiritual blessings to graceless men, upon graceless conditions; that is, to graceless qualifications, which graceless men, while such, may have; and that, therefore, baptism and the Lord's supper cannot be seals to such a covenant. And Mr. M. in his preface seems as if he intended to give up this point also; for he calls this graceless covenant "a graceless phantom;" which is really to grant the whole which I contend for; for this is the very point I meant to prove, namely, the non-existence of such a covenant; for God's covenant requires holiness, and nothing else; and it promises eternal life to those who comply with it. But its blessings are not promised to graceless men, as such, nor to graceless qualifications.

However, if we will read Mr. M.'s book through, we shall see that he is so far from giving up this covenant as "a graceless phantom," that he has exerted himself to the utmost to save this "graceless phantom" from non-existence; because, without it, he knows no way in which graceless men, as such, can be admitted into the visible church of Christ. For he does not pretend that they can make a profession of godliness; yea, he is confident that none may warrantably make a profession of godliness, unless they have the highest degree of assurance. There must therefore be a graceless covenant for graceless men, as such; to profess which, requires nothing more, nothing higher, than graceless qualifications as necessary conditions of its blessings; or graceless men, as such, cannot profess a present consent to any covenant at all; and so cannot be admitted as members of the visible church, which, he says, "is in covenant with God," or have a covenant right to covenant blessings. For they who are destitute of the qualifications necessary to a covenant right to covenant blessings, can have no covenant right to them. To say otherwise, is an express contradiction.

The method which in my former piece I took to prove the non-existence of such a graceless covenant as has been described, was, 1. To turn the reader to the covenant with Abraham, the covenant at Sinai and in the plains of Moab, and to the gospel covenant, that he might see, with his own eyes, that these were, each of them, holy covenants, which required a holy faith, a holy love, a holy repentance, a holy obedience; and that those who have these holy qualifications are entitled to eternal life. Nor is there any matter of fact in Scripture plainer than this; so that none of these were that graceless covenant for which Mr. M. contends, which promises its blessings to graceless men, as such. Nor has Mr. M. pointed out one unholy duty in that covenant with Abraham, (Gen. xvii.;) nor one unholy duty in that covenant at Sinai, or in that covenant in the plains of Moab, or in the gospel covenant; nor has he denied, that eternal life is promised to every one who complies with God's covenant, as exhibited in these various ways, at these several times; so that my argument, from the nature of the covenant, as it is to be found in the written instrument, stands unanswered. And let it be remembered, that this argument is conclusive, without determining the nature of holiness, or faith, or repentance, or entering at all into the disputes which subsist between the Calvinists, Arminians, Neonomians, Antinomians, etc., relative to the perfection of the divine law, total depravity, regeneration, etc. For if it be proved that God's covenant, to which God's seals are annexed, promises salvation to those who consent to it, and that there is a certain connection between a real compliance with it and eternal life, then Mr. M.'s external covenant, to which he says the seals are annexed, which does not promise salvation to those who consent to it, nor establishes any certain connection between a real compliance with it and eternal life, is essentially different from God's covenant, and so is, strictly speaking, "a graceless phantom." But, 2. In order to prove the non-existence of a graceless covenant, I introduced the doctrines of the perfection of the divine law, and of total depravity, into the argument, as thus: since the divine law requires holiness, and nothing but holiness,

and since the unregenerate are totally destitute of the holiness required, there is therefore no covenant existing between God and man, with which the unregenerate, while such, do comply in the least degree. Upon which Mr. M. declares "that he is become sensible that our different sentiments, in this particular, (terms of communion,) are, in a great measure, owing to our thinking differently upon other important points;" and so he has offered to the public his own scheme of religion, which may be summed up in these eight articles:—

1. That self-love is essential to moral agency.

2. That this self-love, which is essential to moral agency, is by the divine law required of us as our duty.

3. That this self-love, which is essential to moral agency and our required duty, is, in our present guilty state, absolutely inconsistent with that love to God which the law originally required of Adam before the fall, and which is still required in the moral law.

4. That our natural total depravity arises merely and only from its being thus inconsistent with this self-love to love God.

5. That in these circumstances it is contrary to the law of God, and so a sinful thing, for us to love God.

6. That our natural total depravity, not being of a criminal nature, doth not disqualify us for sealing ordinances; as it entirely ceases to be our duty, since the fall, to love that character of God which was exhibited in the law to Adam. And more especially,—

7. That now, since the fall, we are naturally inclined and disposed, our total depravity notwithstanding, to love the new character of God, which is revealed in the gospel, so that we shall, without fail, love it as soon as known, without any new principle of grace. For, these things being true, it will follow,—

8. That unregenerate sinners, who are awakened and externally reformed, must be considered as being, in the temper of their hearts, as well affected to the gospel, did they but know it, as the regenerate; and their religious desires and endeavors as being of the same nature and tendency; and therefore they

may enter into covenant with God, and attend sealing ordinances, with as much propriety as the regenerate.

This is the sum and substance of his scheme. And in this scheme of principles we may see the fundamental grounds of his thinking differently from us in the particular point under consideration, namely, the terms of communion.

The design of the following sheets is, first of all, to review Mr. M.'s external covenant, to see if its true and real nature can be known; and then to show its inconsistency with the doctrines of the perfection of the divine law, and of total depravity, as held forth in the public formulas approved by the church of Scotland, and by the churches in New England. After which, the leading sentiments of his scheme of religion shall be considered, his mistakes be pointed out, and the opposite truths be briefly stated and proved from the word of God; that the nature of ancient apostolic Christianity may be ascertained from the infallible oracles of truth; to the end that the right road to heaven may be kept open and plain for the direction of awakened sinners, and for the confirmation and comfort of young converts.

INTRODUCTION.

SEVERAL PHRASES EXPLAINED, AND QUESTIONS STATED.

In order to prevent and cut off all needless disputes, and that the reader may clearly understand the following sheets, the meaning of several phrases shall be explained. Particularly, —

1. By a *conditional covenant* is meant, a covenant which promises its blessings upon some certain condition; so that no one can claim a covenant right to its blessings, if destitute of the requisite qualifications.

2. By the *covenant of works* is meant, that covenant which promises eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience, through the appointed time of trial, and threatens eternal death for one transgression.

3. By the *covenant of grace* is meant, that covenant which promises pardon, justification, and eternal life through Jesus Christ, to all who repent and believe the gospel; that is, to real saints, and to no others.

4. By a *graceless covenant* is meant, a covenant which promises its blessing to graceless men, as such, on certain conditions, or qualifications, which are professedly graceless, and which may take place in graceless men, while such.

5. By *complying with a covenant* is meant, doing that, or having those qualifications which, according to the tenor of the covenant, entitles to its blessings. Thus, for instance, Adam could not have been said to have complied with the covenant of works which he was under, until he had persevered in perfect obedience, through the whole time of trial; for nothing short of this would have entitled him to a confirmed state of holiness and happiness, that is, to eternal life;

as all grant. And thus a sinner cannot be said to have complied with the covenant of grace, whatever legal terrors he has had, and whatever pains he has taken in religion, until by the first act of saving faith he is united to Jesus Christ; for nothing short of this entitles him to pardon, justification, and eternal life, according to the gospel; as is written, (John iii. 18, 36,) "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." Indeed, Mr. M. says, "that no man, short of perfection, can be properly said to have complied with the gospel." But our Savior declares, with great solemnity, (John v. 24,) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life." So that on the first act of saving faith a sinner becomes entitled to eternal life. (Gal. iii. 26, 29.) "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Again, a man may be said to have complied with any supposed graceless covenant, when he has the graceless qualifications to which the blessings of that covenant are promised, but not before. So that, if a "fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty," is a requisite qualification to the blessings of this covenant, then no man has a covenant right to the blessings of it until he is "come to this fixed resolution;" that is, if there is an external covenant, "distinct from the covenant of grace," promising to the visible church all the "external means of grace, and the strivings of God's Holy Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation," by which the visible church is constituted. And if this "fixed resolution is absolutely necessary to church membership, and so to a title to these promises, then no man has a title to these promises, or" is qualified to be admitted a member of the visible church, until he is, in fact, "come to this fixed resolution:" but whenever he is "come to this fixed resolution," he ought to be considered as having complied with the external covenant; and so as having a covenant right to its blessings. Mr. M. says, that I have "a very singular notion about the nature of covenanting; as if it required a present compliance with every thing required by the covenant into which they enter." This

I never said. But indeed I do think, that it is a contradiction in terms, to say that "a covenant promises certain blessings to those, and to those only, who have certain qualifications; and yet some who have not the required qualifications have a covenant right to the blessings promised." Nor am I "singular in this notion," for all mankind think so too. However, "that no man short of perfection can be properly said to have complied with the gospel," is a very singular notion, indeed; and in effect makes the covenant of works and the covenant of grace precisely one and the same thing. But to proceed: —

6. By entering into covenant, and engaging to perform the duties which the covenant requires, a man binds himself to be doing the duties required by the covenant, in the manner in which he engages to do them, as long as the covenant is in force. To say otherwise, is to say that a man binds himself, and yet does not bind himself, which is an express contradiction. Thus the Israelites at Mount Sinai, and in the plains of Moab, bound themselves and their posterity to observe all the rites of the ceremonial law, so long as that should be in force; but when the ceremonial law was abrogated, they were no longer bound to observe its rites. And thus, if Mr. M.'s external covenant does in fact require religious duties to be done in a graceless manner, so long as sinners remain graceless, and no longer, then, as soon as ever sinners are converted, they are free from the bonds of this covenant, as much as the Jews were from the ceremonial law, at the resurrection of Christ; and so are then at liberty to enter into the covenant of grace, and to engage to live by faith on the Son of God, and to be holy in all manner of conversation, pressing towards perfection, the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; but not till then — agreeable to the apostle's reasoning in Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3. But if this external covenant, which requires duties to be done in a graceless manner, is in fact binding for life; if it is in this sense an everlasting covenant, as was the covenant with Abraham, (Gen. xvii.,) then no man who has entered into it is at liberty, while he lives, to cease performing duties in a graceless manner. "For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her

husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." Mr. M. may now take his choice. He may say, that his external covenant, which requires duties to be done in a graceless manner, is binding for life, or it is not. If it is not binding for life, then it is self-evident that it is not *an everlasting covenant*, like that in Gen. xvii. If it is binding for life, then he who enters into it binds himself to perform all duties in a graceless manner as long as he lives. This difficulty against his scheme he has not removed; nor has he ventured to look it fairly in the face.

7. By an *unconditional covenant* is meant, a covenant which promises its blessings to all whom it respects, without any condition at all; so that no qualification at all, of any kind, is necessary in order to a covenant right to all its blessings. Thus God's covenant with Noah and with his seed, and with every living creature with him, even with the fowl and with every beast of the earth, that all flesh should no more be cut off by the waters of the flood, is of the nature of an unconditional grant, conveying the promised security to all, without respect to any qualification whatever.

Question 1. Is Mr. M.'s external covenant conditional, or unconditional? If unconditional, then no qualification whatever is requisite in order to a covenant right to all its blessings. Pagans, Turks, Jews, Deists, heretics, and the scandalous, have as good a right as such to partake at the Lord's table, as to hear the gospel preached. If conditional, then, —

Ques. 2. Doth Mr. M.'s external covenant require, as a condition of its blessings, holy exercises of heart, or unholy exercises of heart, or no exercise of heart at all, nothing but external bodily motions, considered as unconnected with any volition? If holy exercises of heart, then no graceless man, as such, hath a right to its blessings. If unholy exercises of heart, then it is a graceless covenant, which he says is "a graceless phantom." If no exercise of heart at all, nothing but external, bodily motions, then our hearts have nothing to

do with it; and we need not concern ourselves about it; for it is not a thing of a moral nature, and so has no concern in the business of religion.

Had Mr. M. first of all acquired determinate ideas himself, and then given an exact definition of his external covenant, which he has in a public manner been called upon to do, it would have rendered his readers' work easy; but now it is so difficult to know what he means, that even his most learned admirers are not agreed, whether his external covenant is conditional or unconditional. However, let us hear him explain himself.

EXAMINATION OF THE EXTERNAL COVENANT.

SECTION I.

THE NATURE OF MR. M.'S EXTERNAL COVENANT, AS STATED AND EXPLAINED BY HIMSELF UNDER THE NOTION OF A CONDITIONAL COVENANT.

As our author has nowhere particularly enumerated the peculiar privileges and blessings of his external covenant, which those, and those only, are entitled to who are in it; nor particularly stated its conditions; nor so much as let us know with certainty whether it be conditional or unconditional; so there is no way but to look through both his books, and pick up here and there what we can, in order to determine what he means, and consider it in every point of light in which he sets it.

And first, we shall consider it as a *conditional covenant.* And in this view of it, we may observe the following things:—

1. In his first book, he expressly declares, "that the external covenant between God and the visible church is distinct from the covenant of grace." And he speaks of this, as what he had through his whole book been "endeavoring to establish." And in his second book, he undertakes to prove this point over again at large; that it is "of a different tenor," and made for "a different purpose," from that of the covenant of grace. I mention this, because some think that he means the covenant of grace by his external covenant.

2. He affirms over and over, "that the external covenant has no respect to a gracious state of heart;" and it is a chief design of both his books to prove this point; that so he may prove that unregenerate, graceless men, as such, may be qualified to enter into it, and may have a covenant right in the sight of God to all its blessings. So that, professedly, no conditions are required, but those which are graceless; no qualifications are required, but those which are unholy; for he affirms, that

the unregenerate are "totally depraved," and in "a state of enmity against God;" and that they do not perform "any truly holy obedience." So that his external covenant, if conditional, is a graceless covenant.

But it is conditional; for,—

3. He says in his first book, "that none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will endeavor to conform their practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church." And accordingly, he insists that the "disorderly and vicious" should be debarred. But if it is a conditional covenant, and if it requires merely graceless qualifications as the condition of its privileges, then it is a graceless covenant; for that covenant which promises its blessings to graceless men, on graceless conditions, is a graceless covenant.

4. If Mr. M.'s external covenant promises certain blessings and privileges upon some certain conditions, so as that those who are so and so qualified may be members of the visible church, and no others, then it is of great importance to know precisely what these conditions, what these qualifications are, as otherwise no man can possibly determine whether he hath them, and so whether he may lawfully join with the church, and seal the covenant. And this is more necessary on Mr. M.'s scheme than on any other, because he holds, which we do not, that no man may enter into covenant with God in a public profession of religion, and join with the church, unless he infallibly knows that he has the necessary qualifications; unless he is as certain of it as a man, called to give evidence in a civil court, is of a fact which he sees, and to the truth of which he can make oath before the civil magistrate. But if men must be thus certain that they have the requisite qualifications, before they can with a good conscience join with the church, then they must, in this high sense, be certain what qualifications are requisite; yea, there are four things, concerning which they must have the same degree of certainty as they have about any fact which they see with their eyes, before they can on his plan, with a good conscience, join with the church. 1. That the Bible is the word of God, because this is the grand charter of all church privileges. 2. That Mr. M.'s external covenant is contained in the Bible, and is that on which the visible church is constituted; because otherwise no man has any right on this plan to join with the church. 3. What qualifications are necessary, according to this external covenant, to fit them to join with the church and attend sealing ordinances. 4. And then, they must be as certain that they have these qualifications, as that ever they

saw the sun. Now he thinks, that on our scheme, many true saints will be kept back from the Lord's table; but on his scheme, it is evident that no one graceless man, whose conscience is awake, and who knows any thing considerable about his own heart, can join with the church, because there never was, nor will be, any such sinner, who can say that he is as certain of these four things, as he is of a fact which he has seen with his eyes, and of the truth of which he can make oath before the civil magistrate.*

But at present the only question is this, namely, What are the qualifications which are requisite to full communion in the visible church, according to Mr. M.'s external covenant? The covenant of works requires perfection, as the condition of its blessings. The covenant of grace requires repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, as the conditions of *its* blessings: but what does Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant require, as the condition of *its* blessings? What qualifications are requisite to bring a man into this covenant, and to give him a right to all the privileges and blessings of it in the sight of God? If this question cannot receive a satisfactory answer on Mr. M.'s scheme, then his scheme can never be practised upon. He gave no satisfactory answer to it in his first book, as was shown in the sixth section of my reply to it. He has now made another attempt to answer this question in his second book. Let us hear his answer, and consider it.

He says, "that perfection is expressly required in this external covenant." What! as a condition of its blessings? as a necessary qualification to full communion in the visible church? which was the only point in hand. If so, then no mere man since the fall might join with the visible church.

He says, "This covenant requires the holy obedience of a gracious state." What! again, I say, as a condition of its blessings? as a necessary qualification to full communion in the visible church? the only point in hand. If so, then no graceless man, as such, can be admitted into the visible church.

* Mr. Mather, in his preface, says, "I am not so fond of my own judgment, or tenacious of my own practice, but that I stand ready to give them both up, when any one shall do the friendly office of setting light before me." He himself, therefore, cannot swear to the truth of his scheme; he has not "that certain knowledge" of it, that he has "of a particular fact, about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court." It is only his "prevailing opinion." And if his external covenant is a mere human device, his practice upon it is what God hath not required at his hands. He has no warrant to put God's seals to a covenant devised by man. And, according to his scheme, he ought not to act in this affair without absolute certainty. To be consistent, he ought to act no more on his plan, until he is infallibly certain that it is his duty; for, to use his own argument, "if it being a real duty is that which gives us a real right to act, then it being a known duty is that which gives us a known right;" and I may add, "this is a self-evident proposition." But more of this, in Sect. XI.

He says, "This covenant requires the utmost endeavors of the unregenerate." What! still I repeat it, as a condition of its blessings? as a necessary qualification to full communion in the visible church? the only point in hand. If so, then no unregenerate man, who has not as yet used his utmost endeavors, can, as such, be admitted into the visible church, which will keep out every unregenerate man, because no such unregenerate man ever existed.

Again, having spoken of the convictions, that the unregenerate may have, he says, "Under these convictions he may come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and to practise all known duty; set himself to seek an interest in Christ, and to seek needed influences of divine grace. And he may confirm these resolutions upon his own soul, by a solemn covenant dedication of himself to God; engaging by divine assistance to obey the whole will of God, one particular of which is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And I will add, that he may confirm this covenant between God and his own soul by gospel seals. It cannot be denied that the natural powers of our souls do render us capable of such covenanting with God; and the only question is, whether God has required this of sinners? This is the question in dispute." Upon which the following observations may be made: —

1. Was this the covenant in Gen. xvii.? Was Abraham "under conviction"? Had he come to such "unregenerate fixed resolutions"? Did he bind himself in some future time to believe? No, just the reverse. Abraham had been converted above twenty years before this transaction, (Gen. xvii.,) and had both believed, and obeyed in a saving manner, through all this period; so that "the question in dispute" is not, whether Abraham entered into this covenant in Gen. xvii.; for Mr. M. does not pretend he did; and therefore the covenant with Abraham, (Gen. xvii.,) and this covenant of Mr. M.'s, are not the same, but very different. His external covenant, therefore, is, as he declares, "distinct from the covenant of grace," and "of a different tenor," and for "a different purpose;" for nothing was more remote from Abraham's mind, than to enter into covenant, and bind himself to a course of unregenerate duties, in order to obtain converting grace. "Of this there is no dispute;" so that "this is not the question in dispute," whether Mr. M.'s external covenant is the same with that covenant into which Abraham personally entered. (Gen. xvii.) Where, then, in all the Bible, will Mr. M. find his external covenant, as above defined? for no such covenant was ever exhibited by the God of Israel. Besides, —

2. It may be inquired, What does Mr. M. mean by "engaging to obey the whole will of God"? (1.) Does he mean, that men who know they have no grace when they join with the church do covenant and promise that they will from that time and forward, as long as they live, be perfectly holy, and so in fact "obey the whole will of God"? But this is to promise to do what they infallibly know they shall not do; which is a piece of scandalous immorality: for such promises are no better than wilful lies; and this therefore cannot be the thing he means. Or, (2.) does he mean, that a sinner under conviction enters into covenant with God that he will in fact repent and believe the moment he joins with the church, and from that time and forward, as long as he lives, persevere in a life of faith and holiness, pressing forward toward perfection? But this, again, is not much better than wilful lying; for it is to promise that which he has no sufficient reason to expect that he shall do, as he has no heart to do it, and no title to "the divine assistance," to give him a heart to do it. And, besides, if he expected to be converted so soon, he might wait only one week longer, and so be converted before the next Sabbath; and thus put an end to all controversy about the affair. This, therefore, I suppose, is what no awakened sinner ever meant when he joined with the church; and what Mr. M. would not have them to mean; and therefore, (3.) All that awakened sinners can mean, or that Mr. M. can be supposed to intend that they should mean, when they "engage to obey the whole will of God," is no more than that they should "endeavor to do it;" as he expressed himself in the first book. "And I will allow that none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will endeavor to conform their practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church." And if this be his meaning, why did not Mr. M. answer the questions which were put to him in my former piece? "But pray how much must they endeavor?" etc. And besides, if all they mean is to bind themselves to unregenerate, unholy, graceless duties and endeavors, then it will follow, that these graceless duties, according to Mr. M., are the "whole will of God;" for they engage "to obey the whole will of God;" and, on the present hypothesis, unregenerate duties are all they engage; and therefore these unregenerate duties are all that God requires of them. But will Mr. M. say this? No, by no means. For he expressly declares, "Nothing short of perfection may be looked upon as the whole of what is required." What then does Mr. M. mean? In his preface, he says, "I have endeavored, both in this and in my former piece, to set my sentiments in a plain and intelligible light." We believe he

has "endeavored" to do it, but yet he has not done it; for no consistent meaning can be put upon his words.

3. But perhaps it will be said, that Mr. M. has with great plainness exactly stated the requisite qualifications for church membership, in these words, "a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty," if we only understand his words in their plain, common, literal meaning. But is this his meaning, or will he stand to it? For, first, the candidate for admission is to come to a fixed resolution to forsake "all known sin." But enmity to God, impenitence, and unbelief, are "known sins," as all acknowledge, but gross Antinomians. And secondly, to practise "all known duty." But to repent and believe the gospel, to love God and our neighbor, to lead lives of universal holiness, are "known duties;" for all who profess to believe the Bible to be the word of God, do in fact acknowledge these to be duties indispensably required of all the disciples of Christ; yea, of all to whom the gospel comes; gross Antinomians excepted. To be sure, our Savior affirms, that no man can be his disciple unless he doth deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him. And thirdly, the candidate for admission into the visible church, is to come to "a fixed resolution" to do all this; to a resolution which is "fixed," in opposition to one that is unfixed; so that his goodness shall not be like the morning cloud and early dew, which quickly passeth away; or like the stony and thorny ground hearers in the parable, (Matt. xiii.;) all whose religion came to nothing, because their resolutions were not "fixed." Now will Mr. M. stand to this, that none ought to be admitted into the visible church, but those who are thus, in deed and in truth, "come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty; and who are so infallibly certain that they are come to this "fixed resolution," that they could give oath to it, with the same assurance as they could to any matter of fact which they see with their eyes; without which assurance, according to him, no one can with a good conscience make a public profession of religion, and enter into covenant with God? If he will, every unregenerate man in the world will be secluded, as will appear before we have done.

Look through the Bible, and you will find no class of unregenerate men so very self-conceited, as to be habitually confident, that they have "a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty," but the Pharisees. They could say, "All these have I kept from my youth up;" and, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." And the very reason and

ground of their confidence was their ignorance of the true nature of the divine law; as it is written, "For without the law sin was dead," and so, "I was alive without the law once;" for every sinner who knows himself to be unregenerate, under genuine conviction, knows that he is under the dominion of sin, dead in sin, having no heart to repent, and forsake "all known sin," and to turn to God, and to the practice of "all known duty;" for in this unregeneracy consists, namely, in having no heart to turn from sin to God. And even every sinner who is only a little orthodox in his head, knows that, according to Scripture, the resolutions and religion of unregenerate sinners, instead of being "fixed," is like that of the stony and thorny ground hearers; and like the morning cloud and the early dew, which quickly passeth away. Besides, the Pharisees really thought that they were godly men; so that indeed there is not one single instance of a man in Scripture, who, knowing himself to be unregenerate, yet thought himself, as such, to come to such a "fixed resolution;" much less, that was "infallibly certain" of it. But to be more particular:—

If none may be admitted into the visible church but those who are come to this "fixed resolution," and who are quite certain that their resolution is "fixed," then what will Mr. M. do with infants? for, according to this rule, if his own reasoning is conclusive, when disputing against us, all infants ought to be secluded; for we have no evidence concerning any one in particular, that it is come to this "fixed resolution;" for thus he reasons against us, in his first book: "None can suppose, that every male among Abraham's seed, in all succeeding generations, were truly gracious by the time they were eight days old." And in his second book, he says, "Nor can the proof of it, which I before offered, be evaded, without asserting that Abraham had sufficient grounds for a rational judgment of charity, that all his seed would be in a gracious state by the time they were eight days old." This he says in order to prove that saving grace is not a necessary qualification to church membership, even in the adult. And it equally proves, that such a "fixed resolution" is not necessary; "for none can suppose, that every male among Abraham's seed, in all succeeding generations, were come to this fixed resolution by the time they were eight days old;" but as he adds, "There was an express command to confirm the covenant with them at the age of eight days; which is an incontestible evidence, that a gracious state" (and not that such a "fixed resolution") "was considered as necessary in order to their being taken into covenant, and becoming complete members of the visible church."

Again, this rule of admission into the visible church, laid down by Mr. M., must, according to his own way of reasoning, have secluded in a manner the whole congregation of Israel, who entered into covenant at Mount Sinai; for they were not come to this "fixed resolution to forsake all known sin." For he observes, "How soon did they corrupt themselves, when Moses was gone up into the mount," and fell into that "known sin" of idolatry! And therefore, to use his own words, and to turn his own reasoning against himself, "It is beyond the utmost stretch of charity, to suppose that the people who then entered into covenant, were come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin." Indeed, it is certain they were not; and therefore it is certain, according to Mr. M.'s way of reasoning, that such a fixed resolution was "not respected" in the external covenant, as a necessary qualification; much less, an infallible certainty that they had it. And this consequence he seems to have been aware of, when he said, "No, it is plain God proceeded to take them into covenant by *mere sovereignty;* even as in his covenant with Abraham he included his infant seed." And so again, speaking of the Israelites' covenanting in the plains of Moab, he says, "By absolute sovereignty, God extends this covenant, and this oath, even to such whose consent to it was not so much as asked; and as the consent to this covenant was not so much as asked of some that were taken into it, it is abundantly evident that they were not taken into it as gracious persons." And we may add, that it is equally evident that they were not taken in as persons come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and to practise all known duty. And thus we see Mr. M., if his reasoning is conclusive, has confuted his own scheme, and has proved that his external covenant, which requires such "fixed resolutions," in order to enter into covenant with God, was not the covenant on which the visible church was constituted. And he has found out a new way, never before heard of, of taking the adult into covenant, without asking their consent, by mere "sovereignty;" even as infants are taken in, without respect to any qualification in them whatsoever. Because it is said in Deut. xxix., Neither with you only do I make this covenant, etc., but also with him that is not here; just as it is among us, when a minister is ordained, and some of the members of the church are necessarily absent on the ordination day; the covenant between the pastor and the church is made with the whole church, the consent of the absent members being taken for granted; or else these words have respect to those who were then unborn, even to all future generations, who were comprised in that covenant, just as infants were. But to return:—

Mr. M. so far forgets himself as entirely to give up, not only the necessity of such "a fixed resolution," but of any qualification whatsoever; and even expressly declares, that his external covenant is absolute and unconditional, and that herein it differs from the covenant grace. But if his external covenant is merely an absolute and unconditional grant of certain privileges and blessings, then, since the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is removed by Christ, it gives the whole Gentile world as much right to the Lord's table, as to the word preached, without respect to any qualification whatever; for a pagan, a Turk, or a Jew, while such, have a right to hear the gospel preached, for the grant is unconditional. "Go preach the gospel to every creature." And if all the privileges of the visible church of Christ were made as common, by a grant equally unconditional, a pagan, a Turk, or a Jew, would have, as such, as good a right to baptism and the Lord's table, as to hear the gospel preached. So now the visible church of Christ becomes invisible, being absorbed and swallowed up in the world, without any mark of distinction, according to Mr. M.

It may be observed that our author says, that in my former piece, I have "wholly misrepresented his sentiments," and given his scheme the "bad name of a graceless covenant." And if he all along meant that his external covenant was a mere absolute, unconditional grant, which has "no respect to a gracious state of heart," nor to any other qualification whatever, then I own I have wholly misrepresented his sentiments in my former piece. But then he ought as frankly to own, that he has in his former piece "wholly misrepresented" them also; and that he has carried on the same misrepresentation in this second book, in which he speaks of his external covenant, not as a mere unconditional grant, but as a mutual covenant between God and the visible church, which is to be entered into by us, and sealed on our part; in order to which, some qualifications are absolutely necessary on our side, namely, that we "come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty." But I submit it to the judgment of the judicious candid reader, whether the truth of the case is not this, that Mr. M. himself does not distinctly know what his external covenant is; and however ingenious he may be, yet it is beyond his abilities to give a consistent account of this creature of his own imagination; for let his external covenant be conditional or unconditional, it is merely a creature of his own imagination. For if it is conditional, the conditions of it are merely unholy, graceless duties; and so it is a graceless cove-

nant, which is a "graceless phantom," as was proved in my former piece. And if it is unconditional, it wholly destroys the visible church, as it leaves no mark of distinction between the church and the world; and Philip had no right to say, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest;" for, believe or not believe, he had an equal right to baptism; and so baptism must cease to be an external badge of a Christian. Let a pagan Indian, merely that he may be in the fashion, demand baptism for himself and his children, and unqualified as he is, we have no right to refuse him; for he has the same right to baptism as to hear the gospel preached. But that the covenant with Abraham was really the covenant of grace, which Mr. M. owns is a conditional covenant, I have proved in my former piece. But let us hear Mr. M. speak for himself.

SECTION II.

MR. M.'S EXTERNAL COVENANT, REPRESENTED BY HIM AS AN UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT, EXAMINED IN THIS VIEW OF IT.

Our author says, "Whoever reads that covenant with Abraham, recorded Gen. xvii., with attention, must unavoidably see," "that although the covenant of grace is set forth in it;" (for he says, "the covenant of grace was contained in every dispensation of God to mankind; each of them contained promises of eternal salvation to believers;") "yet that covenant, as then made with Abraham, was not strictly the covenant of grace." I grant, that besides pardon, grace, and glory, temporal good things were promised in that covenant; and so they are under the gospel. (Matt. vi. 33.) But God's fatherly care of believers in the world is one of the blessings of the covenant of grace, in the strictest sense. But this is not the thing. Mr. M. has respect to the nature of the promise, which, being unconditional, is inconsistent with the covenant of grace; and therefore cannot be reconciled to it, the blessings of which are promised only conditionally, if we believe; but the blessings of this covenant in Gen. xvii. are promised unconditionally, believe or not believe. For thus Mr. M. says, "It has some peculiarities which are not reconcilable with it." And this appears from that "chief promise contained in the covenant:" "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting cove-

nant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." But, pray, why is not this chief promise reconcilable with the covenant of grace? This is the reason Mr. M. gives; because "this promise is as full, as express, as absolute and unconditional to his seed, as it was to Abraham." Nay, but the apostle Paul, when preaching pure gospel, said to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" so that the promise was as full and express to his seed, as it was to the jailer himself. But Mr. M. will say, that this promise to the jailer and his house was conditional; but the promise to Abraham and his seed was "absolute and unconditional;" and this being so, it not only is not the covenant of grace, but it cannot be "reconciled" with it. I believe Mr. M.'s external covenant is in its very nature so inconsistent with the covenant of grace, that it cannot be reconciled with it. The whole Christian world, the Anabaptists excepted, have till now thought that the covenant with Abraham was the very covenant of grace itself; but it seems, it is so inconsistent with it, in Mr. M.'s view of it, as "not to be reconcilable with it," because the covenant of grace promises the heavenly Canaan to us and to our seed, and that God will be a God to us and them conditionally, if we and they believe; but the covenant in Gen. xvii. promised the earthly Canaan, and that God would be a God to Abraham and his seed "unconditionally."

But Mr. M. goes on: "This difference between the tenor of the covenant of grace and the covenant with Abraham, could not escape the Doctor's notice; but being resolved to make out his scheme, he puts in a supplement into the covenant, which has not the least countenance from the covenant itself, or from any other place in the Bible. God speaks to the pious parent in that ordinance, (baptism,) saying, 'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed,' that is, *if they will take heed to walk in my ways.* This last conditional clause is a mere arbitrary addition to the covenant with Abraham, invented only for the sake of making that reconcilable to the covenant of grace; but no such clause is ever once represented as belonging to the covenant of grace, or to the covenant with Abraham." To which we reply,—

That the Assembly of divines, in their larger Catechism, say, that "the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect, as his seed." And yet, in order to enjoy the blessings of this covenant, it was necessary, on Christ's part, that he should make his soul an offering for sin; and on our part, that we should become Christ's seed by a true and living faith. If Christ had not

died, or if we do not believe in him, God had not been obliged by covenant to make him "heir of all things," or us to be joint heirs with him. So the covenant of grace, in a shadow, was made with Abraham, who was a type of Christ, and with all his seed. And yet, in order to enjoy the blessings of this covenant, it was necessary that Abraham should renounce idolatry, and separate himself from an idolatrous world, and walk before God, and be perfect, in the sense in which good men are said in Scripture to be perfect, (Gen. vi. 9. Job i. 1;) and that he should command his children and his household after him to follow his example. This was necessary on Abraham's part. And it was necessary that his seed should keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken. (Gen. xviii. 19.) If Abraham, on the divine call, had refused to leave Ur of the Chaldees, and to take Jehovah for his God; or had he afterwards returned to his native country and to his false gods, and persisted in idolatry, he would not have been made the heir of the holy land, the type of the heavenly inheritance. If his seed had finally refused to leave Egypt, and to give up the gods of Egypt, and to follow the Lord to the holy land, God would not have been obliged by covenant to give them the enjoyment of it. Therefore, although the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii.) was expressed in the form of an absolute and unconditional promise, to him and to his seed, yet it is manifest, that conditions were implied, both with respect to him and to them.

And in this view of the Abrahamic covenant, as a conditional covenant, the divine conduct can be justified, in swearing, concerning that generation whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, that they should never enter into his rest; because they did not believe his word, nor obey his voice, as their father Abraham had done. So they could not enter, because of unbelief. Whereas, had God been obliged, by an absolute, unconditional promise, to bring them into the land of Canaan, he had been, what they were ready to charge him with, really guilty of a breach of covenant.

And in this view of the Abrahamic covenant, as a conditional covenant, the conduct of Moses can be justified in that speech of his to the two tribes and half tribe, in Num. xxxii. 6—15; wherein he expressly declares, that if they should turn away from the Lord, as their fathers had done, whose carcasses were fallen in the wilderness, they would be destroyed themselves, and be the means of destroying all the congregation; "for if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness, and ye shall destroy all this people;" whereas, had

God been obliged, by an absolute, unconditional promise, to bring them into the holy land, and put them in actual possession of it, there could have been no more danger of their destruction than there is that the earth will be destroyed by a second general deluge, notwithstanding God's covenant with Noah. (Gen. ix. 11, 12. See also Deut. vii. 12.)

And in this view of the Abrahamic covenant, as a conditional covenant, the divine conduct can be justified in the present rejection of the seed of Abraham, who have been cast off seventeen hundred years, notwithstanding God had said, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an *everlasting* covenant;" for "because of unbelief they were broken off;" for there is no standing in God's church but by faith; as it is written relative to the Gentile converts, who had been grafted into the good olive, "And thou standest by faith." (Rom. xi. 20.) For God might consistently reject the seed of Abraham, if they refused to walk in the steps of Abraham, provided they were taken into covenant in this view. But if God had taken them without any proviso, and absolutely and unconditionally engaged to be their God in an everlasting covenant, so far as I am able to discern, he would have been obliged to keep them for his covenant people, notwithstanding their rejecting the Messiah by unbelief.

But as Mr. M. is so confident that the Abrahamic covenant was absolute and unconditional to him and to all his seed, and that all the blessings comprised in that chief promise of it, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed," were made sure to them without this conditional clause, — "if they will take heed to walk in my ways," which, he says, "is a mere arbitrary addition to the covenant with Abraham, invented only for the sake of making that reconcilable with the covenant of grace" — therefore it may not be amiss to stop a few minutes, and take a view of some of the consequences which will unavoidably follow from his notion of this covenant, and from his manner of reasoning in support of it.

1. If the covenant with Abraham is "unconditional," and so "not reconcilable" with the covenant of grace, then the covenant of grace was not "contained" in it; unless it contained in it something not reconcilable with itself; that is, unless two covenants were contained in that one covenant, in their own nature so inconsistent as not to be "reconcilable" to each other. The Abrahamic covenant is "absolute and unconditional," and therefore it is not the covenant of grace, says Mr. M. And he may as well say, therefore, the covenant of grace is not implied in it at all, nor in any sense whatever "set forth" in it. For

nothing is contained, or set forth in it, which is neither expressed nor implied. But the covenant of grace is neither expressed nor implied; because there is no condition expressed nor implied. Thus Mr. M. has secluded and wholly shut the covenant of grace out of the Abrahamic covenant; for to shut out all conditions, is to shut out all conditional covenants.

2. But if the covenant of grace was not implied in that covenant with Abraham in Gen. xvii., because that implied no condition, but was absolute and unconditional to him and to his seed, then, for the same reason, the covenant of grace was not implied in the covenant with Abraham in Gen. xii., xiii., and xv.; for in each of these, which are all the places the promises are to Abraham and to his seed, and are delivered in the form of absolute and unconditional promises, exactly, precisely after the same tenor of the covenant in Gen. xvii. Pray, reader, stop here, take your Bible, turn to the cited chapters, and see with your own eyes. And when you have read these chapters, then, —

3. Turn to the first promise made by God after the fall. (Gen. iii.) "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" and see, and consider, that this also was in the form of an "absolute, unconditional" promise, and respected their posterity as much as it did Adam and Eve. Therefore, by parity of reason, Mr. M. must say, that it was not the covenant of grace, nor reconcilable to it.

4. To say that any conditions are implied, if Mr. M.'s way of reasoning is just, "is a mere arbitrary addition to the covenant" with Adam and with Abraham, "invented only for the sake of making it out" that there never was any covenant of grace at all, from the beginning of the world to the days of Abraham; for no "conditional clause" is ever once expressly inserted in the covenant with Adam or with Abraham, from the first revelation of it, until that in Gen. xvii. And therefore, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, there was no covenant of grace exhibited in all this period of two thousand years.

5. And therefore, as the covenant of grace, if these things are true, never had been revealed, from the beginning of the world to that transaction in Gen. xvii.; and as that was not the covenant of grace, nor "reconcilable to it," so circumcision, which was appointed as a seal of that covenant in Gen. xvii., and of no other, was not appointed to be a seal of the covenant of grace in any sense whatever; for at that day no covenant of grace had ever been exhibited; for every promise, which had been made to Adam, or to Abraham, was as absolute and unconditional as that in Gen. xvii., and respected their seed as much as themselves.

6. And therefore, circumcision not being, in fact, in its original intention, a seal of the covenant of grace, the apostle Paul considering it as such in Rom. iv. cannot make it such. It is true he calls it "a seal of the righteousness of the faith," and goes about to illustrate and confirm his doctrine of justification by faith, a doctrine peculiar to the covenant of grace, from God's dispensations to Abraham; and even goes so far as to say, in so many words, that "the gospel was preached to Abraham;" but if Mr. M. is right, in all this he was mistaken. The covenant with Abraham was not the gospel, was not the covenant of grace, nor indeed reconcilable to it. Its seal, therefore, was not the seal of the covenant of grace; it was not a seal of the righteousness of the faith; for the covenant of grace is conditional, and "wholly a personal affair;" but the covenant with Abraham was unconditional, and made the "seed joint-heirs with the parent." Therefore, if these things are so, it will follow,—

7. That the visible church originally was set up before any covenant of grace existed, upon a covenant "of a different tenor," and "for a different purpose;" and as the visible church is the same now, under the gospel dispensation, as it was under the Abrahamic, it must be considered as containing the same thing still,—a visible church built on an external, unconditional covenant.

8. As the visible church is thus founded merely and only on this unconditional covenant, so no qualifications at all are requisite in order to our being complete members of it, in good standing, even in the sight of God; yea, we may be taken in "without our consent," even in adult age. And to use Mr. M.'s own words respecting the Israelites at Mount Sinai, in application to the whole Christian world, Papists and Protestants, Arians, Pelagians, Socinians, Arminians, Antinomians, drunkards, adulterers, thieves, liars, etc.,—"it is plain God has proceeded to take us all into covenant, by mere sovereignty, even as in his covenant with Abraham he included his infant seed;" no more respect being had to any qualification whatever, in the adult, than in infants of eight days old.

9. And therefore all our churches in New England are wrong, even every one of them, essentially wrong, and Mr. M.'s among the rest, in obliging our people, even such as have been baptized in infancy, to make a profession of their faith, and to give their consent to some covenant or other, requiring either gracious or graceless obedience; for neither the one nor the other is requisite to full communion in the visible church, because that is founded on an unconditional covenant, which

requires no qualifications at all of the adult, any more than of infants eight days old. And therefore, —

10. As, on this unconditional covenant, no qualifications whatever are requisite to a complete standing in the visible church, so, by necessary consequence, no crimes, how gross soever, can constitutionally expose any one to excommunication, or to be debarred from church privileges; for, if any crime whatever could regularly expose one to excommunication, then a freedom, at least, from that crime would be a qualification absolutely necessary in order to a complete standing in the visible church; which would suppose, that the church was not founded on a covenant absolutely unconditional.

If, therefore, we will come into Mr. M.'s external covenant, considered as an unconditional covenant, unless we are inconsistent with ourselves, we must give in to all these necessary consequences; and so excommunicate even excommunication itself out of the Christian world, and fling open the doors of the church to all comers, how heretical and vicious soever they be.

But, on the other hand, if we consider the covenant with Abraham (in Gen. xvii.) as the covenant of grace, and so implying the conditions of that covenant, as St. Paul did, as was proved in my former piece, then not one difficulty will lie in our way. That objection relative to infants, and that relative to the Sinai covenant, and to the covenant in the plains of Moab, were answered in my former piece, in Sect. VII.; and nothing new is offered by Mr. M. but what is obviated at first sight, only granting a condition to be understood in the covenant, (in Gen. xvii.,) though not expressed. And we must be obliged to grant this with respect to every exhibition of the covenant of grace, from the beginning of the world to that day, all which were delivered in the form of absolute, unconditional promises; or else be driven to the dire necessity of saying, that from the beginning of the world to that day, no covenant of grace had ever been revealed.

Thus we have finished what is needful on Mr. M.'s external covenant, considered as an unconditional covenant. Should any say that it is certain, that Mr. M. cannot intend that his external covenant should be an unconditional one, the reply is ready, namely, that it is certain that no man can tell, by what he has published, what he does mean. But granting he meant — as for my part I understood him to mean when I wrote my answer to his first book — that his external covenant should be a conditional covenant; then the conditions are gracious or graceless. If gracious, then no graceless man, as such, can

be admitted into the visible church. If graceless, then his external covenant is a graceless covenant. This is its nature, and by this name it ought to be called, to the end its name may point out its nature, and distinguish it from every other covenant.

Indeed, it must be granted, that every man has a right to give a name to his own child. And Mr. M. has given a name to his covenant; he has called it the external covenant; but perhaps, on reconsideration, he may think that there is no propriety in giving it this name. 1. Because his covenant consists not in externals only, but also in internals, namely, in "a fixed resolution" to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty; for a fixed resolution is an internal thing, as much as saving grace. 2. Because this name does not at all distinguish it from the covenant of works, or covenant of grace, which are both of them external covenants, as much as is his covenant; but it is the design of different names to distinguish things of different natures. The covenant of works was an external covenant, as it was administered to Adam, "peculiarly worded to suit his circumstances." There was no internal duty expressly required. The only sin expressly forbidden was an external one, namely, "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." Eating is an external act; and this was the only action expressly mentioned in the covenant of works, as it was administered to Adam; there is therefore much more propriety in calling that an external covenant, than there is in calling Mr. M.'s covenant by this name. And so the covenant of grace, as it is administered in the gospel, free from the shadows, rites, and ceremonies of the old dispensation, is as external a covenant as Mr. Mather's; for it requires that we not only believe in our hearts, but also confess with our mouths; that we not only believe, but also are baptized and attend the Lord's supper, doing this in remembrance of him. Yea, the gospel requires of professors all external duties to God and man; and particularly, every external duty relative to church order, with much greater plainness than did the Old Testament; and even descends so low, as to require church members to work with their hands. The name of an external covenant, therefore, is not at all adapted to distinguish Mr. M.'s covenant from the covenant of works, or from the covenant of grace; and yet what he means is really and essentially different from both; for they both require holiness, and nothing else, as qualifications to the enjoyment of the blessings promised in both. But this covenant requires no holiness at all to qualify for the enjoyment of all its peculiar blessings. It

requires to this end nothing but graceless duties. The name, therefore, of a graceless covenant, is the most natural, expressive, and distinguishing name in the world. Mr. M. seems to think, that it might do to call it by the name of "*the externals of the covenant of grace;*" but I think this name by no means will do; for the faith and obedience of the covenant of grace is a holy faith and obedience. In order, therefore, for any faith and obedience to be the externals of the covenant of grace, they must be professedly and to appearance a holy faith and obedience. But the faith and obedience of Mr. M.'s covenant, requisite to a title to all its blessings, are professedly such as a graceless man may have, which is professedly a graceless faith and obedience; for he affirms, that all unregenerate sinners are "totally depraved." Again, Mr. M., although in his former book he had said that "after my most careful inquiry, I must own myself at a loss in determining what they" (Protestant divines in general) "mean by 'being under the external administration of the covenant of grace;'" yet now, in his second book, he is even willing, if this would give content, to call his covenant by the name of "the external administration of the covenant of grace." But this is a very improper name; for when he takes a man into the church and administers the covenant, the covenant which he administers to the man is not the covenant of grace, but professedly "a covenant distinct from the covenant of grace." It ought, therefore, by no means to be called the external administration of the covenant of grace. However, it may with no small propriety be called *the external administration of a graceless covenant.*

Objection. The external covenant ought not to be called a graceless covenant, because it is designed as a means of the conversion of sinners; and tends in its own nature to promote their conversion.

Answer. The external covenant in its own nature does not tend to promote the conversion of sinners, but the contrary; for sinners are never converted without conviction of sin; for there can be no sound conversion without true repentance; and there can be no true repentance without true conviction of sin. But there can be no true conviction of sin without a knowledge of the true rule of duty; and the law of God, which requires holiness, and nothing but holiness, is the only rule of duty that God ever gave to man: by this law is the knowledge of sin. This law is the schoolmaster, which God has appointed to bring us to Christ. Now, to send us to school to another schoolmaster than that which God has appointed,

tends not to our conversion, but to our delusion. But Mr. M.'s external covenant is another schoolmaster than that which God has appointed, essentially different from it, and in its own nature inconsistent with it.

SECTION III.

THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE LAW, AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY, INCONSISTENT WITH THE NOTION OF AN EXTERNAL COVENANT APPOINTED BY GOD FOR THE UNREGENERATE, AS SUCH, TO ENTER INTO, REQUIRING GRACELESS QUALIFICATIONS, AND NOTHING ELSE AS THE CONDITIONS OF ITS BLESSINGS.

A LAW, which is a universal rule of life to saints and to sinners, extending to the whole of our moral conduct, at all times, which forbids all sin, and requires us to be holy as God is holy, is inconsistent with any law, or rule, or covenant, which requires any sin, in matter or manner, at any time, of any man, saint or sinner, on any pretence whatsoever. If, therefore, God has given such a holy law as above, he cannot be the author of such an unholy covenant; for it is written, (Jam. iii. 11,) "Doth a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet water and bitter?" And again it is written, (Jam. i. 13,) "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." But for God to require sin, and bind his creatures by a most solemn covenant to sin, and promise them peculiar blessings if they will sin, in the manner his covenant requires, is tempting to sin in a most powerful manner, with great and strong temptations.

1. As to the perfection of the divine law, the assembly of divines at Westminster say, that "the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to a full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin." *

2. As to total depravity, they say, "The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature; whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually

* Larger Catechism, in answer to Q. 99, proved by Psalm xix. 7. Jam. ii. 10. Matt. v. 21—48.

good; and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called original sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions." * (Rom. v. 6, 12—19; iii. 10—19; viii. 7, 8. Eph. ii. 1—3. Gen. vi. 5. Jam. i. 14, 15. Matt. xv. 19.)

As to the doings of the unregenerate, they say, "Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and to others, yet, because they proceeded not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God. (1 Cor. xiii. 3. Isai. i. 12, etc. Conf. Faith, chap. 16.) To which agree the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, etc.; yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath commanded and willed them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin." (Article 13.) To which also agrees Mr. Stoddard: "If men do not act from gracious motives and for gracious ends, they do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what they do; they do not attend the will of God." (Nature of Conversion, p. 7.) Yea, he adds, "There is an opposition between saving grace and common grace. If one be opposite to the other, then they differ specifically. Those dispositions that have contrariety one to the other, that are at war one with the other, and would destroy one another, are not of the same kind: and truly these are so. Common graces are lusts, and do oppose saving grace." So again, (in his Safety, 3d edit. p. 106.) "Man in his natural state is an enemy to this the gospel way of salvation. As man is an enemy to the law of God, so to the gospel of Jesus Christ." And, "All those religious frames and dispositions that are in natural men, are nothing else but the various shapings of self-love." And again, "Self-love is the very root of original sin." And again, "Every unhumbled sinner is striving against the work of humiliation: they are opposing it, either by endeavors to set up a righteousness of their own; seeking in that way to escape condemnation; instead of yielding to God, they are flying to their strongholds, sheltering themselves in their prayers, reformations, desires, etc., or else by wrangling, as a person pursued runs away till overtaken, and then he fights;

* Answer to Q. 25.

so the sinner, when he sees that he cannot save himself is contending with God, objecting against divine proceedings, thinks that God's dealings are very hard measure." (Rom. ix. 19.) And, "Their best works are not only sinful, but properly sins." Thus far Mr. Stoddard.

And thus we see what the "old divinity" is, as to the perfection of the divine law, total depravity, and works done by unregenerate men. Yea, Mr. M. himself, in words at least, grants each of these points. For, 1. As to the perfection of the divine law, he sets himself to prove "that the law is not abated; and therefore nothing short of perfection may be looked upon as the whole of what is required." And, 2. As to total depravity, he repeatedly asserts it through section second and third, and particularly says, "That Adam did totally deprave his nature by his first sin, and wholly lost the moral image of God, in which he was created. And, "Mankind at this day, antecedent to their exercising faith in Christ, are in much the same condition as Adam was after he had sinned." "The unregenerate sinner is in the likeness of fallen Adam." And he speaks of them as "such whose hearts are in a state of enmity against God." And, 3. As to the doings of the unregenerate, he says, "As love to God is the leading principle of all acceptable obedience, so Adam having rendered himself incapable of loving God, he was of course incapable of yielding any truly holy and acceptable obedience to the will of God." And, "Sinners under conviction really aim to establish their own righteousness, which is of the law," which no doubt he will grant is a very wicked thing, being the great sin of the unbelieving Jews, for which, among other things, they were finally cast off by God. (Rom. ix. 32.) Now, therefore,—

1. The question is not, whether all the holy commands of God's law, and holy exhortations of the gospel, are given to the unregenerate, and binding on them; so as that they are wholly inexcusable, and altogether criminals, in every neglect: this I affirm to be the truth; and this Mr. M. grants.

2. The question is not, whether the unregenerate do, in any one instance, perform one act of holy obedience, that is, of obedience which has the least degree of holiness in it. Mr. M. allows they do not; for he asserts, that they are "totally depraved," through section second and third.

3. The question is not, whether the law is at all abated, as to the unregenerate, so as to cease requiring them to perform every duty in a holy manner. For Mr. M. insists upon it, that "the law is not abated;" yea, he "asserts, that whatever God

commands to be done, he requires the "performance to be, not in a gracious, but in a perfect manner."

4. The question is not, whether a sinful manner of attending on the means, which God useth for the conversion of sinners, may not be less sinful and less dangerous than a total neglect. This is granted. And, therefore, —

5. The question, and the only question, is, whether a sinful manner is not sinful? or, in other words, whether the sinful manner itself is required, and so is, strictly speaking, a duty? In this we differ; and accordingly, Mr. M. considers this as a fundamental error in my former piece, "that God requires holiness, and nothing but holiness."

The argument then stands thus: To require the unregenerate to perform duties in a sinful manner, is to require them to break God's law. But Mr. M.'s external covenant requires the unregenerate to perform duties in a sinful manner: therefore Mr. M.'s external covenant requires men to break God's law.

That covenant which requires men to break God's law, is not from God. But this external covenant requires men to break God's law; therefore it is not from God.*

There are but three ways to get rid of this argument; either, first, to deny the perfection of the divine law; or, second, to deny total depravity; or, third, to be inconsistent. The church of Scotland, and the churches in New England, in their public formulas, not choosing to take either of these ways, were necessitated to leave Mr. M.'s external covenant out of their scheme of religion, and to affirm that "sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace." But each of these three ways, to get rid of this argument, and to establish the external covenant, Mr. M. has taken.

1. To this end, he denies the perfection of the divine law, namely, "that God requires holiness, and nothing but holiness." And that, —

2. In express contradiction to himself; for he says, "I assert, that whatever God commands to be done, he requires the performance of it to be, not in a gracious, but in a perfect manner." Which is evidently to require "holiness, and nothing

* If God's law requires holiness, and nothing but holiness, the apostle's words are strictly true. (Rom. viii. 7.) The totally depraved are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. But as the external covenant is of a nature opposite to the law of God, and suited to the carnal mind, as it requires graceless, unholy, sinful duties, therefore the totally depraved, as such, may be subject to it; and so the carnal mind, which is totally opposite to God's law, may be in conformity to the external covenant; and likewise lays a foundation for love; and therefore the carnal mind naturally loves the external covenant. And what we love, we wish to be true.

but holiness;" for a perfect manner of performing every duty, perfectly excludes all sin. And if God requires this "perfect manner," he does, by so doing, forbid the contrary: every imperfection, therefore, is forbidden; and accordingly he says, that "the imperfections found in believers are sinful." Surely, then, the total depravity found in unbelievers is sinful also; and yet he pleads, "that if God, consistent with the law of perfection, may require the imperfect obedience of the believer, he may also require such doings, endeavors, and strivings, as take place in sinners, while unregenerate and entirely destitute of holiness." Now, I readily grant, that if God may consistently require the imperfections of believers, which are sinful, he may also require the unregenerate to seek and strive in that sinful manner in which they do; for if he may consistently require sin in the one, he may in the other also. But Mr. M. tells me, that God forbids sin in both; for he says, "I assert that whatever God commands to be done, he requires the performance to be, not in a gracious, but in a perfect manner," which forbids the imperfections of the believer, and the total sinfulness of the "totally depraved." Inconsistencies of this kind, good as his natural genius is, run through his book, whenever he has occasion to speak on this subject; and he brings many texts of Scripture to keep himself in countenance; as if it were possible, that a book inspired by God should contain such inconsistencies; whereas, could it be proved, that the Bible ever required any sin, or any action to be done in a sinful manner, it would be such an argument that it did not come from Him who is perfectly and unchangeably holy, and who does, and who cannot but hate sin, even all sin, at all times, and in all persons, with perfect hatred, that I should not know how to answer it; for it looks like the most glaring contradiction in nature, that God should command, call, invite, urge, persuade, and beseech us to do what he perfectly hates. And to say, that the true and living God does not perfectly hate all sin, at all times, is, as all will grant, wickedly to reproach the Holy One of Israel. (Ps. l. 21.) "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee."

The Pharisees took great pains in religion; they fasted twice in the week. And they thought they performed their duties in the manner in which God required. "All these things have I done from my youth up." "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." For if the law required them to do duties in the manner in which they did, then, in doing as they did, they did their duty

So they were not sinners, in their own view; rather, they were righteous, and needed no repentance; for they had nothing to repent of; for they had "forsaken all known sin, and practised all known duty;" so that their consciences acquitted them. "As touching the righteousness of the law, I was blameless." It was impossible they should be brought to repentance, while they viewed things in this light. It was almost impossible to beat them out of their scheme; therefore publicans and harlots stood a better chance for conversion than they did, as our Savior declares,* (Matt. xxi. 31, 32.) For although the strivings of an awakened sinner, with the law of perfection in his view, may "be useful to promote conviction of sin," yet the strivings of a sinner, with a law in view which requires him to do as he does, instead of being useful to promote conviction of sins, tends to establish him in his own righteousness. For in doing as he does, he does "all known duty," and so is blameless; and so is righteous, and so needs no repentance, no atonement, no pardon, no Christ, no grace; and if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. So this scheme issues at last in infidelity.

Our author says, "God has repeatedly commanded sinners to consider their ways." Very true, so he has; but has God ever once commanded them to consider their ways in an impenitent, self-righteous, self-justifying, Christ-rejecting manner? in which manner sinners always do consider their ways, so long as they remain under the reigning power of an impenitent, self-righteous, self-justifying, Christ-rejecting spirit; that is, so long as they remain unregenerate; for in this spirit unregeneracy consists. But as soon as ever sinners begin to consider their ways in a penitent, self-condemning, God-justifying, Christ-prizing manner, they readily begin to comply with "the repeated commands to consider their ways," which God has given to sinners. And these sinners are now not unregenerate, but regenerate. Thus holy David did. (Ps. cxix. 56.) "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." And these are they, (Matt. xi. 12,) who take the kingdom of heaven by force. For the great truth of the gospel, viewed as such sinners view them, will always be attended with answerable effects. (Matt. xiii. 23.) But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the

* "But this is, I think, a great mistake:" saith a late writer: "they were not Pharisees that these words were spoken to, but Sadducees;" referring to Matt. xxi. 31. But it is plain, from ver. 45, that the Pharisees thought themselves to be the men, and that they were not mistaken; for the evangelist saith, "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them." Read from ver. 28—45.

word, and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit. But stony and thorny ground hearers bring forth no fruit. While the vail is on the heart, the gospel produces no fruit; but when the vail is taken away, then divine truths are seen in their glory, and then every answerable affection is begotten. (2 Cor. iii. 15—18.) But every unregenerate sinner is blind to the holy beauty of Christ's holy religion; for, as Mr. Stoddard says, "As man is an enemy to the law of God, so to the gospel of Jesus Christ." Therefore, as St. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore Christ told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, *he cannot see* the kingdom of God; that is, cannot understand and embrace Christianity. These, then, are the men who take the kingdom of heaven by force, and not they whom Mr. M. describes as going about to establish their own righteousness, which is of the law, who, as he rightly observes, "never do accomplish what they aim at."

But is it not indeed surprising, that Mr. M. should urge those words of the apostle, as an exhortation to impenitent, Christ-rejecting strivings, — such as are all the strivings of impenitent, Christless sinners, — in 2 Cor. v. 20: "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"? For the apostle's exhortation is, "Be ye reconciled to God;" and his argument is, God is now ready through Christ to be reconciled to you. Now, supposing this exhortation was given to the unregenerate, as Mr. M. would have it; if they believed that God was ready to be reconciled through Christ, — that is, if they believed the gospel to be true, — why should they not return home to God immediately, as the prodigal son did to his father, as soon as ever he came to himself? But Mr. M. would have them, instead of returning to God now, in compliance with the apostle's exhortation, rather put it off a while, and strive "to obtain those discoveries of God through Christ, by which they would be reconciled to God." Nay, but the apostle had just made all those discoveries to them, which are contained in the gospel on that subject; and adds, "Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." And if they had no prejudice against the truth, why should they not receive it at first hearing? And if they believed him, what could hinder their immediate return to God, unless they were at heart utterly disinclined to a reconciliation to him, let him be ever so willing on his part? And if they were utterly disinclined to a reconciliation to God in their hearts, none of their strivings could be considered as being of the nature of a

compliance with that exhortation, "Be ye reconciled to God." But if they were so prejudiced against the truth as not to receive it, when clearly held forth before them by an inspired apostle, how could they be said to "strive to discover" it? For a man does not strive to discover what he shuts his eyes against, when held up clearly before him. And so long as this disinclination to God and the truth remains total in a sinner, it is of the nature of a total rejection of the divine exhortation, "Be ye reconciled to God." And as soon as the least degree of love to God takes place in the heart, the sinner can no longer be considered as unregenerate, if the unregenerate are "totally depraved," as Mr. M. says they are.*

But Mr. M. supposes, that Acts viii. 6, will be to his purpose. "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." True, they did so; and what was the consequence? Our blessed Savior, who knows all things, tells us, namely, that every one, who, with a good and honest heart, heard the word, did understand it, and bring forth fruit; while stony and thorny ground hearers fell away. (Luke viii.) Now, the question is this: Was it not the duty of every one of them to have a good and honest heart, and so to hear, with a good and honest heart, the first time? Yes, says Mr. M.; for "I assert that whatever God commands to be done, he requires the performance to be in a perfect manner." But what then are these texts to his purpose, and a thousand more such like? For there are a thousand in the Bible as much to his purpose as these.

3. But the bottom of the business with Mr. M. is this — that although in words he says that the unregenerate are "totally depraved," yet he does not seem rightly to understand the Scripture doctrine of total depravity, as held forth in our confession of faith; but really to suppose, that unregenerate sinners are naturally inclined, while unregenerate, to love God, even God's true and real character, as revealed in the gospel; so that, as soon as ever they discover what that character is, they will love it, even without any new principle of grace, even as naturally as Jacob loved Rachel the first time he saw her; but as to that character of God which is revealed in the law, he supposes that sinners never can, and never will love it; because "to love it is the same thing as to love their own misery." But as to the character of God which is revealed in the gospel, they need no new principle of grace in order to love it, any more than Jacob needed a new principle in order to love

* See the Nature of Spiritual Blindness considered. Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel, Sect. X.

Rachel. And this being supposed, awakened sinners may, from natural principles, long and most earnestly desire to "discover" this new character of God which is exhibited in the gospel; and seek after this discovery with proper, direct desires after it, for itself. And these desires he therefore considers as being in nature, kind, and tendency, the same with what he calls the gracious desire of those whom he esteems regenerate. These seekings and strivings he therefore supposes to be required in the same sense, and for the same purpose, as the seekings and strivings of the true saint. To establish these sentiments, is one chief design of his book. And thus far I fully agree with him, that there is no difference in kind between the religious exercises of the unregenerate and the religious exercises of his regenerate man. And in this view, I wonder not at his zeal against this fundamental sentiment of a specific difference, as clearly held forth in President Edwards's Treatise concerning Religious Affections; for his regenerate man has professedly no new principle of grace; and accordingly he appears in fact to have no more grace than his unregenerate man has; for he is as great an enemy to God's law, and to the holy nature of God, therein exhibited, as the unregenerate. And the God he loves is professedly of a different character, even of a character so different, that the unregenerate will naturally love it, as soon as they discover it and its favorable aspect towards them, without any new principle of grace. And this is the true reason ninety-nine in a hundred of his regenerate men are so at a loss about their good estate, that they cannot see their way clear to make a profession of godliness; which renders his external covenant as necessary for them as for the unregenerate; for if the door is not opened wide enough to take in the unregenerate, as such, his regenerate man cannot with a good conscience come into the visible church. For, as Mr. Stoddard, in order to prove the doctrine of the specific difference between common and saving grace, rightly observes,* "If the difference between saving grace and common lay in the degree, no man could judge that his grace is saving." And thus he goes on to reason: "Men may know that they have saving grace, (1 John iii. 14. 2 Cor. vii. 10); but if the difference lay in the degree, how should men go about to determine that their grace was saving? The man may know that he has a greater degree of confidence, sorrow, and zeal, than formerly he had; he may have reason to think that he goeth beyond some other professors in these things; but upon what foundation can he

* Nature of Saving Conversion, p. 8.

determine that he hath them in such a degree as to secure his salvation? Where has God revealed what degree is saving, and what is not saving? What warrant has any man to judge himself in a safe condition, if there be several degrees of grace that are not saving? What rule can any minister lay down to guide men in this matter? Men must needs be left in a perpetual uncertainty, and remain in the dark about their eternal state." Thus far Mr. Stoddard. But of these things more hereafter, when we come to consider the new scheme of religion which Mr. M. has advanced, in order to support his external covenant.

SECTION IV.

ISAI. xlv. 19. I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.
MATT. vii. 7. Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find.

A VIEW OF THE EXHORTATIONS AND PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL; AND THE TRUE REASON POINTED OUT WHY THE DOINGS OF THE UNREGENERATE DO NOT ENTITLE TO THE BLESSINGS PROMISED.

OUR author says, "If it should be asked, whether there are any promises of salvation to these endeavors of the unregenerate, I readily answer, there are none. The absolute authority of God is not such a limited thing, that he can lay no commands upon his creatures, without adding a promise to the performance; divine sovereignty is not encumbered with such a tether." These words have led me to take a view of the divine exhortations and promises through the Old and New Testament, a few of which may be transcribed: —

EXHORTATIONS TO SINNERS.	PROMISES ANNEXED.
Lev. vi. 2—6. If a soul sin, he shall restore, he shall bring his trespass-offering unto the Lord; the priest shall make an atonement for him, etc.,	Lev. vi. 7. And it shall be forgiven him.
Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. If they shall confess their iniquity; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity;	Lev. xxvi. 42. Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.
1 Kings viii. 47, 48. If they shall bethink themselves, and repent, and make supplication unto thee; and so return unto thee with all their heart; and pray unto thee toward the house which I have built for thy name;	1 Kings viii. 49. Then hear thou their prayer in heaven thy dwelling-place; and forgive thy people, etc.

EXHORTATIONS TO SINNERS.	PROMISES ANNEXED.
Prov. i. 23. Turn you at my reproof:	Prov. i. 23. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.
Prov. ii. 3, 4. If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;	Prov. ii. 5. Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God.
Prov. xxviii. 13. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, [that is, his sins,]	Prov. xxviii. 13. Shall find mercy.
Isai. lv. 6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.	Isai. xlv. 19. I said not to the house of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.
Ver. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord,	Isai. lv. 7. And he will have mercy on him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.
Matt. vii. 7. Ask,	Matt. vii. 7. And it shall be given you.
——— Seek,	——— And ye shall find.
——— Knock,	——— And it shall be opened unto you.
Matt. vii. 8. For every one that asketh	Matt. vii. 8. Receiveth.
——— And he that seeketh	——— Findeth.
——— And to him that knocketh,	——— It shall be opened.
Luke xviii. 14. He that humbleth himself	Luke xviii. 14. Shall be exalted.
Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptized	Mark xvi. 16. Shall be saved.
Acts iii. 19. Repent and be converted,	Acts iii. 19. That your sins may be blotted out.

These texts are a true specimen of the whole tenor of the sacred writings on this subject; and let the candid reader stop, and look over them two or three times, and consider and think for himself; and these and such like remarks will rise in his mind of themselves; or, at the least, the truth of them will appear plain as soon as mentioned.

1. There are directions given to sinners, in the Holy Scriptures, in and by which a full answer is given to that question, "*What shall we do to be saved?*" and beyond dispute, it is their duty and interest to follow God's directions, immediately and without the least delay.*

* *Question.* If a full answer is given to that question by God himself, why do awakened sinners continue to repeat it? Why do they still say, "What shall we do to be saved?" If God has answered the question, why are they at a loss?

Answer. God's answer does not suit their hearts, and so they are deaf to it. God speaks, and speaks plain enough, but they do not hear. God cries, "Hear, and your soul shall live." They have ears, but they are uncircumcised, pagan ears; and so in hearing, "they hear not, neither do they understand." For every good and honest heart hears the word, understands it, and brings forth fruit. Their deafness and blindness are wholly of a criminal nature. Thus, when the famine came, the prodigal son cried, What shall I do? The right answer was plain and easy to a good and honest heart; but he hated to go home; for as yet his heart was opposite to it. Therefore he said, "I will go and join myself to

2. There are promises made to sinners, without exception, entitling them to all the blessings of the gospel, upon their complying with God's directions.

3. These promises are not of the nature of general encouragements, rendering it hopeful, yet leaving it uncertain, whether sinners should obtain, if they comply with the directions given them by God; but they are as plain, full, and express promises, as any in the Bible, and do establish a certain and universal connection — thus, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy." This promise extends universally to all who confess and forsake their sins; and establishes a certain connection, "they shall find mercy." But that there never was one who failed, and never will be one who will fail, who complies with God's directions, is evident from the testimony of Him who came from the Father's bosom, and knew the mind of God, and came into this world to reveal it unto us; for he says, not only, "Ask, and it shall be given you;" but he adds, "For every one that asketh receiveth." From which we have as full evidence, as we have that Jesus is the Son of God, that there never was, and never will be, one single instance among mankind, who, according to this direction, ever did ask, or ever will ask, for the blessings of the gospel, and fail of receiving; "for every one that asketh receiveth." So again, "Hear, and your soul shall live;" "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth;" "Whosoever will, let him come;" "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," etc., all prove the same point. Besides all this, and that which confirms the point still further, is, that destruction is threatened only to those who refuse to hearken to God's directions. (Prov. i. 24, 25.) "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity." But on the other hand, (ver. 23,) "Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you."

4. These promises do establish a certain connection between the first act of compliance with these directions and the blessings of the gospel. Indeed, where one act of compliance takes place, sinners will continue in a course of compliance; as for example: When the prodigal son returned home to his father, he was upon the first act, upon his first return, received

a citizen of that country, and feed his swine." But when he came to himself, he instantly felt it through and through his heart, that it was his present duty and interest, immediately, to arise and go to his father. And nothing but the vicious state of his heart prevented him knowing this before.

as a child, and entitled to all the privileges of such. But then it is equally true, he never left his father's house, and turned prodigal again, as he had done before; but, on the contrary, he brought forth fruit meet for repentance. And as he was thus received on his first return, so it is in all instances; for, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy;" and again, "Ask, and it shall be given you; for every one that asketh receiveth." If the first act of compliance with these directions should not entitle to the blessings promised, by parity of reason, the second act of compliance might not entitle; and so it might come to pass that some who comply with God's directions, might fail of the blessings promised, contrary to the plain tenor of all the promises. (See John iv. 14; v. 24. Matt. x. 42. Acts ii. 38; xvi. 31. Eph. i. 13, 14. Phil. i. 6.)

5. These promises make it certain, that among all the unpardoned sinners in the world, whatever pains they have any of them taken in religion, yet there is not one, who ever, in any one single act, did comply with God's directions; for had they complied, they would have been pardoned; for God himself has said it. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And our blessed Savior, in his Sermon on the Mount, directs us to pray for pardon. "When ye pray, say, Forgive us our debts;" and then soon declares, "Ask, and it shall be given you." And then, to put his meaning forever beyond dispute, he adds, "For every one that asketh receiveth." He, therefore, whose sins are not pardoned, never yet, in the whole course of his life, did so much as once confess and forsake them, and ask God to forgive him, according to divine direction; no, not once. To disbelieve this point, is, in effect, to disbelieve the whole of divine revelation; for he that believeth not this, hath made God a liar.

Now, if these things are true, we may hence learn,—

1. That Mr. Sandeman's scheme, relative to directions to be given to sinners, is not agreeable to the word of God. For he says, "Let all the prophets and apostles be consulted upon the question, What is required of us in order to acceptance with God? we shall find their unanimous reply to be, every thing, or nothing;" for, according to Mr. Sandeman, the sinner is pardoned before repentance, and faith is not an act, but a mere passive thing. So, therefore, "nothing" is to be done by the sinner, in order to pardon and justification; for no volition, act, or exercise of mind whatever, is needful in order to it; and so no direction at all is to be given. For Mr. Sandeman, speaking

of the atonement, says, "All its true friends will join in affirming, that Christ came to render impenitent sinners accepted unto everlasting life, by the works which he himself wrought, and thus, by the discovery of preventing goodness, to lead them to repentance." Thus they are regenerated by light, according to Mr. Sandeman. But from what has been said, nothing can be plainer, than that both the Old Testament and the New do give directions to sinners to do something. Thus, when those who were pricked at the heart on the day of Pentecost, asked Peter, and the rest of the apostles, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter did not say, "Be perfect;" nor did he say, "Do nothing;" but he said, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins." So again, a few days after, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And when the trembling jailer put the question to the apostle Paul, "What shall I do to be saved?" his answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To say, therefore, that there is nothing to be done in order to salvation, and so no directions to be given to sinners, is directly contrary to the Holy Scriptures.

Mr. Sandeman's scheme, in a few words, is this: that we are to give instruction to the unregenerate, but no exhortation at all. We are to hold up the truth to their view, with its evidence, that it may strike their minds, give them hope, and beget love; for regeneration is wrought by light, and is the effect and fruit of faith. But no call, no invitation, no direction, no exhortation is to be given; because no volition is to take place before justification; for the single belief of the simple truth, in which simple belief no volition is implied, is the only thing implied in that faith by which we are justified. But no means can be proper to be used for the production of this faith, but merely holding up the simple truth, with its evidence, to view. This, therefore, is the whole the preacher has to do; and the truth, as soon as known, gives hope, and so begets love to itself, just as the news of a large importation of corn in an island perishing with famine, as it spreads through the island, gains credit, gives hope of relief, and begets love to that which is to relieve them. And all godliness consists in love to that which relieves us. This is Mr. Sandeman's scheme. Notice, (1.) He has the same notion of total depravity and regeneration with Mr. M., namely, that the carnal heart is at enmity only against that character of God which is exhibited in the law; but as to that character which is revealed in the gospel, the carnal, unregenerate heart is disposed

to love it, as soon as known; just as the news of the importation of corn, in such a famished island, will be agreeable to every inhabitant who hears it and understands it. (2.) In both Mr. Sandeman's and Mr. Mather's scheme, we need no new principle of grace in order to love God, any more than the famished inhabitants of the island needed new stomachs, in order to love bread; and therefore, (3.) The regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, on both schemes, are absolutely needless. For, (4.) As we are not to be reconciled to that character of God against which we are at enmity, but only to a character which is so agreeable to our hearts in our natural state, that it will beget love to itself, as soon as known, on which account we need no new principle of grace, in order to love it, so, for the same reason, the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Spirit are needless; even as it was with Jacob when he went to Padan-aram to get a wife: the state of his mind being such by nature, that he would love Rachel as soon as seen, he therefore needed no supernatural influence to dispose his heart to love her. (5.) On both schemes the sinner is pardoned before repentance; for he believes first; then he is justified; and then he hopes; and then he is regenerated and loves; and then he repents. But to return:—

2. From what has been said, we may also see, that Mr. Mather is equally mistaken in insinuating that sinners may comply with the exhortations and directions of God to sinners, and yet be entitled to no promise; for God has, as we have seen, in the most plain and express manner, annexed promises to his exhortations and directions. Our author says, "The absolute authority of God is not such a limited thing, that he can lay no commands upon his creatures, without adding a promise to the performance." But the creed of even all the ancient patriarchs, short as it was, had this for one article — that God was a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. (Heb. xi. 5, 6.) And under the Jewish dispensation, God affirms that he never said to the house of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. (Is. xlv. 19.) And when the Son of God appears in flesh, he speaks plainer still: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." And to fix and settle us forever in the belief of this point, he goes on to reason thus: "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" — *to them that ask him*, be they who

they will, of all the human race; for the gospel is, by divine order, to be preached to *every creature*, and "whosoever will, let him come;" and "he that cometh shall in no wise be cast out." The warrant to come to the throne of grace, is founded in the blood of the Son of God; for he has opened a way into the holiest of all, by his own blood. And the invitations of the gospel are given to all, without exception. "Go ye into the highways, and as many as ye find, bid to the marriage." Any sinner, therefore, on this side hell, has a good warrant to come to the throne of grace, to confess his sins to God, and to ask forgiveness in the name of Christ; and no sinner, who hath done so, in the manner in which God has directed, ever went away from the throne of grace unpardoned; but it has always happened to him, as it did to the prodigal son: when he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. Of the truth of this we have the same evidence as we have that Jesus is the Messiah. For he hath said, that "every one that asketh receiveth."

3. From what has been said on this subject, we may learn, that these words of Mr. Stoddard, before quoted, are strictly true. Speaking of the unregenerate sinner, he says, "They do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what they do; they do not attend the will of God." * For if they did attend God's directions, and obey the divine exhortations, and ask, and seek, and knock, as they are commanded, they would obtain. The only reason their prayers are not answered, the only reason they ask, and receive not, is, because they ask amiss; that is, because they ask not as God directs them, but in a manner contrary to his directions. So again, the only reason they seek and do not find, is because they seek amiss; that is, as Mr. M. expresses it, "aim at what

* "Men, in their natural condition, are guilty of a world of sin. Their very religion is iniquity. (Isai. i. 5.) They pray for holiness, but oppose it. (John v. 52.) They have not the love of God in them. They praise God because of his excellency, but they do not believe him to be such a one; it is a burden to them that they suspect it, and they wish he were not such a one. They wish God did not see their hearts, and had not power to avenge himself. There is nothing but hypocrisy in all they do. They confess their sins, and bewail their iniquities, but they have no godly sorrow. They put up earnest requests for holiness, but do not sincerely desire it. They strive against sin, and all the while are cherishing of it. They have pangs of affection, but no love. They have some affection to saints, but hate real holiness. They are zealous against some sins, but hate none. They are striving for salvation, but refuse the offers of it. Sometimes God tries them, by convincing them of the great danger of their damnation, and they show a dreadful, wicked, rebellious spirit, that they are scared to see themselves. There is a great deal of the spirit of the devil in them." — *Stoddard's Nature of Conversion.*

can never be accomplished, even to establish their own right eousness," and will not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. For he that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.* And, therefore, —

4. The true reason, and the only reason, that the doings of the unregenerate do not entitle them to the blessings promised in the gospel, is, because, in all they do, there is no one act of compliance with God's directions. For if it is true, that "whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy," then it is equally true, that he who hath not found mercy never did confess and forsake his sins, according to the divine direction. If it be true, that every one that asketh receiveth, then it is equally true, that the unpardoned sinner never did ask pardon at the hands of God, in the sense of the text. For to say, that I have confessed and forsaken my sins, I have asked pardon in the name of Christ, according to the divine direction, yet I have found no mercy, God hath not forgiven me, is, if we may use the language of inspiration, to "make God a liar." Therefore to say, that the unregenerate, in their endeavors, do the things that God commands them to do, and that yet there is no promise to their doings, is expressly to contradict the word of God, for he never said to the house of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. And, therefore, the question between Mr. M. and us is not, whether God has required the unregenerate to ask, and seek, and knock, and strive, and labor. It is granted that he has. And it is affirmed, that God has promised the blessings of the gospel to a compliance with these directions, in God's sense of them. But it is also proved, from Mr. M.'s own words, that the unregenerate, "as such," to use Mr. Stoddard's words, "do not attend the will of God; do not the thing that he commands;" because, as Mr. M. says, "there is no promise of salvation to their endeavors;" whereas God promises salvation to those who comply with his directions.

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* Great pains have been taken to misrepresent and blacken this point. It hath been said, that we affirm that the unregenerate are not required to seek, or strive, or pray; whereas in truth we affirm, that the unregenerate *are required* to seek, and strive, and pray. But then we add, that "they do not the thing that God commands." The question, therefore, is, not whether God requires the unregenerate to seek, and strive, and pray; but the only question is, whether they "do the thing that God commands." This is the point in dispute. St. Paul has declared for our side of the question, in as strong terms as ever we used, (in Rom. viii. 7, 8:) "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And dare any Christian allow himself to hate and to blacken a doctrine taught by an inspired apostle? Or is the doctrine so odious to any, that they will not believe, that he did not teach it, however strongly his words express it?

Now, therefore, let Mr. M. either take sides with the Arminians, and say, that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate; or let him join with Mr. Stoddard, and say, that "they do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what they do; they do not attend the will of God;" or let him openly and plainly declare, "that God has directed sinners what to do that they may be saved; but it is not best that sinners should be urged to follow those directions which God has given them, which if they do follow, they surely will be saved; and that, therefore, he is determined to direct them to do as they do, although there is no promise to their doings; yea, although it is certain beforehand, that they never will accomplish the thing they aim at."

A minister of Christ is sent to preach the gospel to the Indians; and, —

Question 1. Is it not the duty of the Indians to assemble, and hear him?

Answer. Yes, it is their duty to assemble, to hear the gospel preached. If the God of nature speaks to men, men ought to hear.

Ques. 2. Is it not their duty to come to hear with good and honest hearts, the first time they come?

Ans. Yes, it is as really their duty to come and hear with good and honest hearts the first time, as it is at any succeeding time; for it is as really the duty of pagans to be well disposed toward the true God who made them, and ready to hearken to his voice, as it is the duty of any of the human kind. (Rom. i. 20, 21, 28.)

Ques. 3. But if they have all of them pagan hearts, shall they come and hear with their pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, rather than not come and hear at all?

Ans. If they come with pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, they sin greatly. If they refuse to come, their sin is greater. If they come with pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, they are in greater danger of turning a deaf ear to the gospel, to their own destruction; but if they refuse to come at all, their perdition is certain. So, then, it is for their interest to come with pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, rather than not to come at all. (Rom. x. 14.)

Ques. 4. Is the missionary authorized by the commission of Christ to baptize these pagans, as well as preach the gospel to them?

Ans. The commission of Christ authorizes him to preach to them while pagans; but not to baptize them until they become believers. (Mark xvi. 15, 16.)

Ques. 5. Suppose two Indians, in other respects equal; one has heard the gospel twenty years, the other never heard of it; both die pagans in heart: which will be most miserable after death?

Ans. He that hath heard the gospel. For he that knows his master's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. (Luke xii. 47, 48.)

Ques. 6. If so, why is not a birth and education in the heathen world to be preferred?

Ans. In a land of gospel light, there is some hope of salvation from eternal misery; in pagan darkness, there is no hope at all. (Luke x. 10—12. Acts iv. 12. Eph. ii. 11, 12.)

Ques. 7. Is there, then, greater probability of the conversion of some sinners than of others?

Ans. According to the rule by which mankind judge of likelihood, namely, that like things have been wont to take place in like circumstances, it is more likely that some sinners will be converted than others. Thus, more were converted among the posterity of Abraham, from his day to the day of Christ, than in any other nation in the world, through that period. So more were converted among those who attended the ministry of John Baptist, of Jesus Christ, and of his apostles, than among those who never heard them. So there is more hope of the conversion of the children of godly parents, who are in a pious manner devoted to God in baptism, and who are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, than there is of the conversion of the children of ungodly parents, who are brought to baptism merely to be in the fashion, and who are brought up according to the course of this world, in the service of divers lusts and pleasures, to live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. And so it is more likely that they will be converted, who live under an orthodox, pious, faithful minister, and under the watch and care of a church, whose members walk with God, and the light of whose holy examples shines all around them, than they who live under an unsound, ungodly, unfaithful minister, and in the company of carnal and loose professors, who join to hate and to blacken the true doctrines of the gospel, and to ridicule a life of strict piety. And so it is more likely that they who are under deep and genuine legal conviction, will be converted, than they who are quite secure in sin; and more likely that awakened sinners, who forsake bad company, and every external vicious practice, and spend much time in reading God's word, in hearing good preaching, in meditation, in secret prayer, and withal confess their faults to those they

have ill used, and make restitution to those they have injured; more likely, I say, that awakened sinners will be converted who take this course, although moved thereto merely by legal terrors and self-righteous hope, being still dead in sin, contrary to God, and to all good in the inmost temper of their hearts; more likely, I say, than if they with Cain fled from the presence of the Lord, and ran to taverns, and to frolics, and gave up themselves to drinking and debauchery, on purpose to stifle their convictions, and drown the clamors of their consciences. In a word, there is no doubt but that there is much more, even a hundred or a thousand times more likelihood that some sinners will be converted than others. Yet still it remains true as it is written, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." (See also Luke xiii. 29, 30.) Thus Cain was the eldest child of Adam, but he was left, while Abel was taken. And thus the Jews were God's peculiar people, but they were cast off, while the Gentiles were called. And thus Judas, one of Christ's own family, is lost; while a persecuting Saul, brought up among the Pharisees, is saved; that no flesh might glory in the presence of God. (1 Cor. i. 26—31.)

Ques. 8. Is there really any hope at all, in the sinner's case, that he will be converted and saved, but what results merely from the sovereign grace of God?

Ans. The same sovereign grace, which passed by the fallen angels, and provided a Redeemer for fallen man, even the Son of God, to die in our stead, must as freely give us a Sanctifier, or we perish. The same sovereign grace that appoints our lot in a land of light, that presents us with the external means of grace, that begins the work of conviction, that drives the reluctant sinner to an external reformation, and to a close attention to eternal things by legal terrors, even the same sovereign grace must carry on conviction till it is deep and thorough, and give repentance unto life, or the work will never be done; for the sinner, left to himself, will catch hold of some false hope, or go back to security; and so finally, if left to himself, will infallibly perish. And he deserves to be left to himself. He is under the curse of the righteous law of God, and may be justly given up to ruin: there is nothing but the sovereign grace of God to prevent it. And so there is really no hope in his case, but what at bottom results merely from the sovereign grace of God. (Rom. xi. 5—7. Eph. ii. 1—5. Tit. iii. 3—5.)

Ques. 9. Is it for the advantage of the sinner, in this state, to tell him, that God requires him to do as he does, so that, in doing as he does, he does what God requires?

Ans. No. This is not to tell him the truth, nor would this

tend to promote his good, but his hurt; even to settle him down on his own righteousness, while dead in sin, as has been before shown. Rather, when an awakened sinner has been in his closet two or three hours, meditating, crying, and praying, in great anguish, driven on by the fears of hell and self-righteous hopes; yet still wholly impenitent, so that, if there was no hell, he would never make another prayer, or shed another tear for his sins, but rather go back to them with pleasure; when he rises from his knees, I would have his conscience cry out against him in such language as this — "O thou ungodly, impenitent, guilty wretch! thou hast done nothing all this while as it ought to be done. Thy heart is still a heart of stone, wholly opposite to God and to all good. This is thy proper character; and therefore the wrath of God still abideth on thee;" for this is the very truth.

Ques. 10. What directions then ought to be given to such a sinner; and what ought we to say to him?

Ans. Say all the things that God has said. Hold up the perfect law of God close to his conscience, to show him his duty and his sin; for the law is the schoolmaster which God has appointed to bring us to Christ. Hold up the gospel way of salvation, with all its evidence, to his conscience, that he may understand and believe it; for faith cometh by hearing. And let the whole tenor of all our discourse to the sinner be to explain and to enforce the exhortation of John the Baptist, of Jesus Christ, and of his apostles, in those remarkable words — "*Repent and believe the gospel.*" This will tend to increase genuine conviction of all sin and guilt, and to prevent delusive and false hopes, and to shut him up to the faith.

We are to dwell largely on the being and perfections of God, and our original obligations to him, who is by nature God, and our Creator. We are particularly to explain the nature and reasonableness of the divine law, and to answer the sinner's objections against it. We are to exhibit to his view the sin which he stands charged with in the divine law, and the curse he is under for it, and the only way of obtaining pardon through the blood of Christ. In a word, we are to open to his view the whole plan of the gospel, the infinite riches of God's grace, the nature and sufficiency of Christ's atonement, the readiness of God to forgive repenting sinners who come to him in the name of Christ, the calls and invitations of the gospel, the dreadfulness of eternal misery in the lake of fire and brimstone, the glory and blessedness of the heavenly state, the shortness and uncertainty of time, the worth of his soul, the dangers which attend him from the world, the flesh, and the devil, the inex-

cusable guilt of final impenitence, the aggravated punishment of gospel sinners, etc.; and so bring into the view of his conscience every argument and motive to repent and to return to God through Jesus Christ.

Just as any plain man of common sense would do, who was sent after a runaway son, who had risen against his father, and made an attempt on his life, and then run off; for which his father had disinherited him, and was determined he should be disinherited forever, unless he would return, and before the whole family, on his knees, confess his fault, and take the whole blame to himself, and justify his father's resentments, and freely own and acknowledge that it was good enough for him to be cast off by his father, and no blemish, but a beauty in his character, to disinherit such a son; and in this view, ask forgiveness, as of mere free grace. Common sense would teach such a man, in all he said to this rebellious, runaway son, to vindicate his father's character and conduct, and to prove to him that all the blame was in him, and that it was his duty and interest, without the least hesitation, or one objection, on the first invitation, to do as did the prodigal in the parable, when he came to himself, namely, arise, and go to his father. And so long as the runaway son should refuse to do this, common sense would teach any plain man to consider him as impenitent; and to look upon all his tears and cries as selfish and hypocritical. But should the runaway son not only refuse to return, but begin, in his own justification, to plead and say, "My father's character and my father's government are not objects of love. He has disinherited me. To love him would be the same thing as to love to be disinherited; which would be to love my own disgrace and poverty; which would be to love my own misery; which is impossible. To say that this conduct of his is not a blemish, but a beauty in his character, would be a sin; for I ought to love myself, and to stand for my honor and for my right. Such a submission he shall never have from me. However, if he will receive me to favor, and restore me to the inheritance, impenitent as I am, I will forgive what is past, and be reconciled for the future;" common sense would declare such a son, not only impenitent, but obstinately impenitent, and intolerably haughty. And, in this view, any plain man would tell him, in the most peremptory language, that there was no hope in his case, unless he would humble himself, and come to a deep and sound repentance. Thus John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, called sinners to repentance; and never once gave impenitent sinners, as such, the least ground to hope for pardon; but expressly said, "Except ye repent, ye

shall all perish." And to the true penitent they gave no ground to hope for pardon, on the foot of his own righteousness; for it was a settled point, that without shedding of blood there is no remission. And, indeed, that repentance is not genuine, in which we do not, from the heart, give up every self-justifying plea, take all the blame to ourselves, and accept the punishment of our iniquity, with a disposition to look only to free grace, through Jesus Christ, for that pardon and salvation which the gospel offers.

Observe, in this plan of dealing with an awakened sinner, two things are taken for granted: first, that total depravity and moral agency are consistent; and second, that repentance unto life is, consistently, both the sinner's duty and God's gift. (Ezek. xviii. 31; xxxvi. 26. Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; v. 31.)

Objection. The runaway son, in the similitude, is a moral agent with respect to all the duties required of him by his father; and so is wholly to blame for his disaffection to his father, and may be considered and treated accordingly; but the unregenerate sinner is not a moral agent with respect to that love to God which is required in the law, or to that faith and repentance which are called for in the gospel; that is, he cannot love God, believe, or repent; and therefore he cannot be considered as being wholly to blame for his disaffection towards God, and for his unbelief and impenitence, or treated accordingly; for "to love God as exhibited in the law, is the same thing as to love his own misery;" and to believe in Christ and repent before he has had "a discovery of Christ," is as impossible as it is to love an object of which we have no idea. To exhort the unregenerate sinner, therefore, as we would exhort such a runaway son, is absurd and inconsistent.

Ans. It is true that in thus dealing with the awakened sinner, we consider him, while unregenerate, as a moral agent, possessed of every qualification essential to moral agency; for we think that unregeneracy consists, not in being destitute of any of those natural faculties which are essential to moral agency, but only in being destitute of a heart to do our duty, and in having a heart opposite thereto. (John iii. 6. Rom. viii. 7.) But want of inclination, and disinclination to that duty which God requires of us, instead of lessening blame, is that for which we are blameworthy. (Luke xix. 27.) We consider the unregenerate sinner, therefore, with respect to love to God and faith in Christ, and with respect to all duties required in law and gospel, as a moral agent, to whom the commands of the one, and the exhortations of the other, may, with propriety, be given; and who is wholly to blame in not obeying the one,

and in not complying with the other. And all we shall, at present, say in answer to the objection, is, that if the unregenerate sinner is not a moral agent with respect to the divine law, then he does not deserve the curse of it, for not continuing in all things: to say which, is to contradict Gal. iii. 10. And if he is not a moral agent, with respect to the gospel, the external revelation of it being enjoyed, then he is not to blame for impenitence and unbelief, nor does he deserve any punishment for these crimes: to say which, is to contradict Matt. xi. 20—24. Luke x. 3—12. John iii. 18, 19; xvi. 9. In a word, if the unregenerate sinner is not a moral agent with respect to law and gospel, then the Old and New Testament, which consider and treat him as such, are not from God. To say, therefore, he is not a moral agent, is in effect to give up divine revelation; that is, to say that the unregenerate sinner is not wholly to blame in not loving God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; and that the unregenerate sinner, who lives under the light of the gospel, is not wholly to blame for impenitence and unbelief, is to deny the first principles of the Scripture scheme of religion, and, in effect, to give up the whole of it. And to give up the Bible, rather than to take that blame to ourselves, which belongs to us, is the very essence of infidelity, and that which constitutes it so great a crime. (John iii. 19, 20.) See President Edwards on Freedom of Will, Part 3, Sect. iv.

SECTION V.

GAL. iii. 10. For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

IMPENITENT, SELF-RIGHTEOUS, CHRISTLESS SINNERS ARE UNDER THE CURSE OF THE LAW OF GOD; BUT THIS IS INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR BEING IN COVENANT WITH GOD, IN GOOD STANDING IN HIS SIGHT, BY ANY WORKS WHICH THEY DO, WHILE SUCH.

WE will premise a few things, and then particularly explain and prove the above proposition, and show the inconsistency between the covenant of works, and Mr. M.'s external covenant, considered as conditional.

1. God, the Creator and moral Governor of the world, did

originally deserve supreme love, and universal, perfect obedience from his creature man. This was implied in that law given to Adam, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

2. God is in himself as amiable now as he was before the fall of man; as worthy to be loved, honored, and obeyed; for he is the same now that he was then. There is no alteration in his nature, and he has done nothing to forfeit his character; if, therefore, before the fall he was worthy of love, he is equally worthy since. To say, that there was originally any blemish in the divine character; or to say, that he has brought any blemish upon himself in any instance of his conduct, since the beginning of the world, is to deny his divinity. It is to say, that he is not by nature God; he is not, and never was, an absolutely perfect being. A denial of the divinity of Christ is the foundation of the Arian heresy; but we must deny the divinity of God the Father, we must deny the divinity of the Godhead itself, or we can never justify the least degree of disaffection toward the Deity in our hearts; but must take the whole blame to ourselves; for if God is in himself the same infinitely amiable being he has been from everlasting, and if all his conduct has been like himself, perfect in beauty without a blemish; if we do not love him with all our hearts, the whole fault must be in ourselves, and not at all in him. And on the other hand, if God has in any instance done amiss, not conducted in that perfect, in that amiable and glorious manner which became him who is by nature God, it must be owned that we have just cause to love him less, and in some degree, at least, to dislike him; and our conduct in so doing may be vindicated. Nor can God be just when he speaketh, or clear when he judgeth, if he looks upon us and treats us as being wholly to blame, in not loving him with all our hearts. But if the blame is not wholly in us, it is partly in him. And if there is the least blemish in his character or conduct, then he is not so perfect as he might be; he is not absolutely perfect; that is, he is not God. Therefore, —

3. The denial of the divinity of the one only true and living God is the only foundation on which, consistently, fallen man can be justified more or less, in not perfectly conforming to the divine law. For if it is granted, that the divine character was originally absolutely perfect, and that the whole of his conduct towards us, from the beginning of the world, has been absolutely perfect too, then every thing in God, and belonging to God, conspires to render him a perfectly amiable and lovely being, and to oblige us

to love him with all our hearts, and to render us criminal and without excuse in the least neglect or defect; nor can there be any excuse invented but what must issue in a denial of his divinity. For if the fault is not wholly in us, it is partly in him; and if partly in him, then he is not absolutely perfect; that is, he is not God. And to say, that, by the fall, man ceased to be a moral agent, is, by fair construction, subversive of the whole of divine revelation. For, —

4. It is a dictate of common sense, that we do not need a surety to pay a debt for us, which we ourselves do not owe. And, therefore, if the divine law was not binding on fallen man, antecedent to the consideration of Christ's undertaking to answer the demands of the law in our stead, then there was no need that he should have undertaken to answer the demands of the law in our stead. For there was no need that our surety should pay a debt for us, that we ourselves did not owe, and could never have owed had he never undertaken in our behalf. An atonement might have been needed for Adam's first offence; but if Adam and all his race, on the apostasy, ceased to be moral agents, and so ceased to be bound by the moral law to perpetual perfect obedience, as Mr. M. maintains, there was no need of an atonement for the "many offences" which have taken place since the fall, for these many offences are not sins; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression," and "sin is not imputed where there is no law." And thus, if we give up the law, we must give up the gospel too, and, to be consistent, become infidels complete. But, —

5. If God, the Creator and moral Governor of the world, was originally an absolutely perfect being; and if he deserved the supreme love and the perfect obedience of his creature man before the fall, and if he deserves the same since the fall; and if we, retaining our original natural faculties, by which, before the fall, man was a moral agent, remain the same still; then may we consistently believe the Bible to be the word of God. For, on these hypotheses, the divine law may be vindicated, which, relative to fallen man, and considered as unregenerate and Christless, says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And if this law was worthy of God, then it might be worthy of God to appoint his Son to be made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law. But of this I have spoken particularly heretofore; * and so need not enlarge.

* Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel, Sect. III. and IV. To which Essay I am constrained so frequently to refer the reader, in order to avoid republishing things which I have already written in that book.

We proceed to explain and prove the
down, namely, — That impenitent, s
sinners are under the curse of the la
inconsistent with their being in cove
standing in his sight; for as many as
law are under the curse, etc.

1. By *sin* is meant, "any want of co
gression of the law of God." This de
given by the Assembly of divines at W
of those two texts, (1 John iii. 4,) "S
of the law;" (Gal. iii. 10,) "Cursed
tinueth not in all things," etc.

2. By *the law* is meant, God's hol
holiness, and nothing but holiness; for
quired sin, then sin would be not only
but also "a conformity unto" the law
essential to Mr. M.'s scheme; an abs
no sooner get rid of than the Ethi
skin.

The holiness required in the divine
love. "The sum of the ten commandme
the Lord thy God with all thy heart, etc.
thyself." So we were taught by our
were children. Nor am I able to expres
more plainness and precision on the subj
my former piece. "The law of Moses, '
duty in the covenant into which the Israe
nothing but holiness. That covenant
exhibited, and externally entered into, w
graceless covenant, that it required nothi
real holiness; nothing but love, with all
and fruits, in heart and life; love to God
are expressly assured by one who came
libly understood the nature of that di
which is the great commandment of the
to our Savior, referring to the law of
unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord t
heart, etc., this is the first and great
the second is like unto it, Thou shalt
thyself.' Thus he had answered the Pha
he proceeded to add another sentiment,
Pharisaic scheme by the roots — 'On t
hang all the law and the prophets;' fo
the Jew to perform every duty in a holy
and required no other kind of obedience

law and the prophets hung on these two commands; so that radically love was all; so that this holy love was the fulfilling of the law, (Rom. xiii. 8, 10;) then the Pharisees, who were entirely destitute of this, were equally destitute of that kind of religion required in the Mosaic law, and so their scheme was torn up by the roots. It is not only a fundamental maxim in the Scripture scheme of religion that 'love is the fulfilling of the law,' but it is expressly affirmed, that without love the highest gifts and the greatest attainments, the most expensive deeds and the most cruel sufferings, are nothing, and will profit nothing. The apostle Paul carries the point so far as to say, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;' as destitute of true and real virtue. 'And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.' And to carry the point as high as it can possibly be carried, he adds, 'And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing;' for in his view, charity, or love, was the sum total of all virtue. Therefore, where there is no love, there is no virtue; not the least degree of conformity to God's nature and law;" for the apostle never dreamt, that that self-love which reigns in the hearts of devils, and of wicked men, was any part of that charity in which he made all true virtue to consist; for then it could not have been said of the vilest sinner, that he hath no charity; whereas the apostle supposes this might be true of some eminent professors, who even gave all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned, that they had no charity. Besides, if that self-love is a part of what the divine law requires, then that which is the principle of all enmity against the Deity, is matter of duty; than which nothing can be more absurd.*

3. By a *sinner*, in the proposition, is not meant merely one that has sinned, and does sin every day, for this is true of saints. But by a sinner is meant, one who is wholly destitute of that holiness which is required in God's law; one who has

* When it is said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," this neither justifies the selfish spirit of wicked men, nor requires the exercise of a like temper with respect to their neighbor; but only teaches us that as our neighbor's welfare is worth as much as our own, (*cæteris paribus,*) so it ought to be as dear to us as our own ought to be; even as it is among the angels in heaven, and as it must always be in creatures under the perfect government of pure benevolence; for this will be exercised towards beings in proportion to their true worth. See President Edwards on The Nature of True Virtue.

been born only of the flesh, and so is o
been born of the Spirit, and so hath n
whose character is given by the Ho
7, 8: "The carnal mind is enmity
not subject to the law of God, neit
then they that are in the flesh can
that the Holy Ghost meant to compr
sinners, is evident from the next wo
in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be
dwell in you." So, then, all those, in
God dwelleth not, are in the flesh; wh
every Christless sinner; for "if any m
of Christ, he is none of his." So that
one who is dead in sin, and an enemy
in the sight of God, infinitely crimin
this, that his law dooms persons of th
misery; which is a punishment infinite

4. By an *impenitent, self-righteous sin*
who, being really of the character just
confessing and forsaking, is habitually
sins, and justify himself in his wickedn
parents covered their nakedness with fig-
could to hide themselves from God, and
justify themselves. The last words whi
called before his Judge, previous to the
him, were designed to excuse himself,
upon God, who had given him such a t
who had tempted him. The words ar
"The woman, which thou gavest to be
of the tree, and I did eat." And yet Mr
in these words, as making "a full confess
as being so humbled, "as that he was
discovery of redeeming mercy with all
dangerous thing to flatter sinners into a g
selves. Adam first covered his nakedn
before God came to call him to an accou
endure to see himself. And when God
he hid himself from the presence of the L
of the garden; for he could not endure
"for he that doth evil hateth the light."
forced to come forth, and appear be
came with guile in his mouth, saying,
cause I was naked, and I hid myself;"
nakedness of his body, but a guilty cons
him hide himself. But he could not bear

dreaded to have it brought into view; and when closely examined and pinched to the very heart, so that he could not conceal the fact which he had done, yet then he would cunningly put into his confession every extenuating circumstance, that as much as possible the blame might be cast off from himself, wherever else it might fall. Ungrateful wretch! to blame his kind Creator and bountiful Benefactor! "The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Nothing is owned, but merely the external act; the bad intention, the proud, wicked, rebellious heart, is kept out of view; their aspiring to be as gods; their believing the serpent's lies before the God of truth, etc. But here we have a specimen of the true nature of impenitence. This disposition to cover their sin took place in our first parents on their fall, and it has spread through all their guilty race. And mankind have proceeded so far, as even to invent new schemes of religion, not revealed in, but contrary to the Holy Scriptures, to cover their sins and to justify themselves in their wickedness. Nor may it be amiss to mention one or two schemes of this sort, that we may see how the charge exhibited in the divine law against the sinner is evaded, and himself freed from blame, and justified in his own conscience.

Thus, the charge exhibited in God's holy law against the sinner is, that *he sins and deserves eternal damnation, for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* "The sum of the ten commandments is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." But the Arminian pleads, and says, No man can be obliged to keep this law; for no man can exercise principles which he has not, for that implies a contradiction; * but we have lost our power "of yielding perfect obedience in Adam. We cannot love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. We are not to blame for not doing what we cannot do; and therefore we are not to blame, nor do we deserve the curse, for not continuing in all things

* By *a principle of love* is meant, a disposition to love, or a heart to love. But to say, I have no heart to love God, and therefore I am not obliged to love him, is to say, that the more depraved I am, the less to blame I am. He who has no heart at all to honor his father and his mother, is, on this hypothesis, blameless. Let the parents be ever so worthy, if the child has no heart to love and honor them, he is free. So a dishonest man, who has no heart to pay his debts, is not obliged; and a covetous niggard, who has no heart to give to the poor, is not bound. For, on this hypothesis, our inclination is our rule of duty, and not the law of God. Not what is right and fit, and as such is required by God, the sole Monarch of the universe, is my duty; but only that which suits my own heart. So Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, nor will I obey his voice." Pharaoh had no principle of love and obedience, and so he was not obliged. So he felt. But the God of the Hebrews imputed it to him for sin.

written in the book of the law to do them. This law is too severe for a fallen world. Christ has died for us; and so the law is abated; and if we do as well as we can, we shall be saved; for it would be unjust for God to require more of us than we can do, and then damn us for not doing." Thus they reason, and thus they believe, and thus their sins are covered even from the sight of their own consciences, and they stand justified in themselves.

Again, the charge exhibited in God's holy law against the sinner is, that he sins, and deserves eternal damnation for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them. "The sum of the ten commandments is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." But the Antinomian pleads, and says, "This law is not in force with respect to fallen man at all; and so I am not in the least to blame for not continuing in all things written in it. For to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, is the same thing as to love my own misery. But to love my own misery is to take pleasure in pain; which is an express contradiction, and in its very nature absolutely impossible; and even inconsistent with my continuing to exist as a sensible being and a moral agent. And, besides, it is contrary to the law of God, which requires me to love myself. That law, therefore, which was given to Adam in innocence, and which obliged him to love that character of God which was exhibited in it, is entirely set aside since the fall; and is binding on no child of Adam, more or less, as a rule of duty; for it is not the duty of any one to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law; nay, it is now, since the fall, contrary to the law of God to do it. For the law of God requires us to love ourselves; but to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, is the same thing as to love our own misery; and, therefore, instead of its being a duty, it is a sin repugnant to the law of God, to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law; and so it ought not to be done. Moreover, no unregenerate unbeliever can love that character of God which is revealed in the gospel, because he doth not know it; for an unknown object cannot be loved. For to love an object of which we have no idea, is to love nothing, which is a contradiction, and in its own nature absolutely impossible. Wherefore, before Christ is discovered to the soul by the Spirit of God, while unregenerate, no man is in duty bound to love either the character of God exhibited in the law, or the character of God revealed in the gospel. Nothing, therefore, remains for unregenerate unbelievers to do,

as their present duty, but to reform their external practice, use the means of grace, and strive and do their utmost, as unregenerate sinners may do, while such. Of such therefore it may be said, that they forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty. Such then, who are come to a fixed resolution thus to do, are qualified to enter into covenant with God, and to attend sealing ordinances; for their being destitute of faith, repentance, and love, is their calamity, but not their sin." Thus Antinomians reason, thus they believe, and thus their sins are covered, even from the sight of their own consciences, and they stand justified in themselves. And thus we see what is meant by an impenitent, self-righteous sinner, namely, a sinner obstinate in his disaffection to the Deity, who covers his sins, and justifies himself in his wickedness.

5. By a *Christless sinner* is meant, a sinner who doth not receive, but doth in his heart reject Jesus Christ; and so is not interested in him, and the blessings purchased by him; and so remains at present under the curse of the law and the wrath of God, as truly and really as if Christ had never died; according to John iii. 18, 36: "He that believeth not is condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on him." But, in this sense, every impenitent, self-righteous sinner is a Christless sinner; for this plain reason, because they do not receive, but reject Christ; as it is written, (Luke v. 31,) "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" for sinners never feel their want of Christ, or look to God through him for pardon in those things in which they justify themselves; or for divine assistance in those things which they think themselves not bound in duty to do. For instance, an Arminian, as he does not think himself to blame for not loving God with all his heart, so he never means to ask pardon of God in the name of Christ, as being to blame for this. He only blames himself, when he neglects to do as well as he can, in his own sense of the phrase; and feels guilt and need of pardon only in these instances. But as to the law of perfection, as he thinks himself not bound by that, so he thinks himself not to blame for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them; and so no atonement, no sanctifier, no repentance, no pardon are needed in this case. So again, an Antinomian, as he doth not believe it to be his duty to love that character of God which is exhibited in his holy law, so he never confesseth his sin in not doing it, or asks pardon of God, or dreams that he needs any pardon in this case, or any Redeemer to atone for this sin, or any Sanctifier to enable him to do this duty; for, if it is not his duty to love that character of God

which is exhibited in his law, then he needs no assistance to do it; for we need divine assistance only to enable us to do our duty. And if it is not his duty to love that character of God which is exhibited in his holy law, then he is guilty of no sin in not loving it; and so needs no Christ, no atonement, no repentance, no pardon in the affair; and thus, that Christ, that pardon, that grace, which are offered in the gospel, he doth not need; and so doth not receive, but reject; yea, he rejects all as an abuse. For, to tell a sinner he needs a pardon in that in which he justifies himself, will affront him; he will think himself abused; he will think himself implicitly charged with guilt, in that in which he is not guilty; and so, instead of desiring the pardon, he will reject the offer as an abuse. And thus do all impenitent, self-righteous sinners, with respect to that pardon, and to that sanctifying grace, which the gospel offers. As they need neither the one nor the other, so they reject both, with all their hearts. For the whole need not a physician, but the sick.

And in every instance in which men justify themselves, they depend, so far as they have any dependence, for acceptance in the sight of God, not on the atonement of Christ, but on their own innocence; for their plea is, *Not guilty.* Here they join issue, and appeal to the judgment-seat of God. (Luke xviii. 9—13.) And therefore, if the divine law doth require mankind to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, notwithstanding our fallen state; if the law of God requires perfection of us as much as it did of Adam; if we are to blame, and deserve eternal death, for not continuing in all things, as really as Adam did for eating the forbidden fruit; and if, on this hypothesis, and in this view, Christ was made a curse to redeem sinners from this curse, yet, if we plead *not guilty;* if we affirm that we are not bound by this law; if we affirm that in our fallen state it is not possible that we should be bound by it; if we join issue on this point, and appeal to the judgment of God; if God brings us in guilty, at the great day, it will be too late then to shift our plea. It will be too late to say that our dependence was on the atonement of Christ. For it may be retorted, "If you were not guilty, you needed no atonement, but this was your plea, *Not guilty;* and you appealed to the judgment-seat of God. It is too late, therefore, now to pretend you depended on the atonement; your first plea precludes this." They must therefore have their trial, and stand or fall, for eternity, on their first plea of not guilty. And therefore it will come to pass, that every impenitent, self-righteous sinner will be condemned, unless they

can make their first plea good, at the bar of God. If the Judge will give up his law, they may be acquitted; but if he abides by what is written, namely, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; as it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," there will be no hope in their case, at that day. And therefore all who, either on the Arminian, or on the Antinomian, or on any other plan, do in heart reject the perfect law of God, for their rule of life in this world, will perish forever in the next.

And thus we see what is meant by an impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinner. Now, in the proposition it is said, that "impenitent, relf-righteous, Christless sinners are under the curse of the law of God." But, —

6. By the curse of the law is meant, the curse threatened in the law of God; even all the curses written in God's book, comprising "all the miseries of this life, and death itself, and the pains of hell forever."

7. When it is said, that they are under this curse, it is intended, that they are already condemned to all this by the law of God, and are liable to have the curse executed in its utmost rigor; that is, to be struck dead, and sent to hell, at any moment. They are reprieved, moment by moment, by the sovereign pleasure of their Judge.

That Christless sinners are thus under the curse of the law, is evident, not only from the tenor of the law itself, but also from the whole course of the divine conduct; for according to this rule God hath dealt with Christless sinners in all ages of the world. As to the miseries of this life, he inflicts them upon them according to his sovereign pleasure. As to death itself, he inflicts it just when he pleases. And as soon as the Christless sinner is dead, in an instant he is in hell, and must endure the pains of hell forever. Therefore, from the tenor of the divine law, and of the divine conduct, it is evident, that God is at liberty, with respect to them, to kill and damn any Christless sinner, at what moment he pleases; and therefore he is not bound not to do so. And therefore there is no covenant between God and the sinner existing, obliging God to bestow any favor on any one Christless sinner now in the world; but he may strike dead and send to hell, justly and without breach of covenant, any Christless sinner who draws the breath of life. Thus, in this sense, impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinners are under the curse of the law.

8. And this is true of self-righteous, Christless sinners, without exception, as the apostle affirms — "As many as are of the

works of the law, are under the curse.
Jews, or baptized Gentiles; or be the
baptized too, as doubtless many were i
tia, to whom he was writing; yet neit
nor their baptism, at all altered the cas
and the uncircumcised, the baptized
all equally under the curse of the law
character; for they reject Christ, and so
him; as by divine constitution none are
those who receive him. (John i. 12, a
fore they must stand or fall by mere l
"Cursed is every one that continueth n

The law doth not say, "Cursed is eve
tile;" nor doth the law say, "Cursed is ev
but thus it is written: "Cursed is ever
Gentile; be he Christian, or Pagan; be
tized, or neither; if he be self-righteou
cursed. For these things alter not the
cumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep t
a breaker of the law, thy circumcision i
For he is not a Jew which is one out
circumcision which is outward in the f
which is one inwardly; and circumcisio
in the spirit, and not in the letter, whos
but of God." Therefore baptized sinner
are as much under the curse of the law, a
tized; and so are as liable to all the m
death itself, and to the pains of hell for
much at liberty to strike dead and send t
self-righteous, Christless sinners who are
are unbaptized. He is not bound by co
more than to the other. But, as to life, an
of salvation, and to the strivings of the
liberty to have mercy on whom he will
certain from the whole tenor of the div
all know, that baptized sinners are as lia
the unbaptized; and when they die, the
outward means of salvation, and inward
and nothing before them but the pains of
there is no covenant between God and th
is nothing of this kind to hinder; but G
to execute the curse of the law on any C
moment he pleases; for they are all in hi
hell by the thread of their lives, justly co
eign disposal; and accordingly, he lets o

and another then, just as he pleases, from day to day, from hour to hour, continually. And this hath been his constant course of conduct in all ages past. And thus every Christless sinner is under the curse of the law. But here it may be inquired, For what crime, or crimes, are they thus, by the law of God, sentenced to eternal woe? To which the answer is plain.

9. This curse, self-righteous, Christless sinners are sentenced unto by the divine law, for not yielding a perfect obedience to it, continually, every day. Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things*. So that the law of perfection is binding on the unregenerate, Christless sinner. And in the judgment of Him whose judgment is always according to truth, they deserve eternal woe, for every instance of defect, in thought, word, or deed; in matter or manner; and that whether they were from eternity elected to salvation, or not; and whether Christ died with an absolute design to save them, or not; and whether they enjoy the strivings of God's spirit, or are given up to their own hearts' lusts; yea, and whether they enjoy the benefit of a written revelation, or not. (Rom. i. 18—21.) "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." So that even the heathen are without excuse; because, when they knew God only by the light of nature and tradition, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful. (Rom. iii. 9.) "For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." "That every mouth may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God," for the curse extends to every one, to every Christless sinner of Adam's race. So that the divine law is binding on fallen man, previous to the consideration of the grace of the gospel; and mankind are under so great obligations to perfect obedience, than in the judgment of Him "who is over all, God blessed forever," they deserve eternal woe, for any one defect for not continuing in all things. For such is the infinite dignity of the Deity, such his infinite worthiness of supreme love and universal obedience, in being what he is in himself, and our Creator, that on these original grounds, it is infinitely criminal not to love him with all our hearts, and obey him in every thing. Nor doth our original apostasy in Adam, or our present depravity, or our guilt and exposedness to eternal destruction, exempt us from the divine law, as our rule of duty, or from its curse for every transgression; nor is God obliged in justice to grant us any relief; for this law itself is the rule of justice, holy, just, and good. (Rom. vii. 12.)

Thus stands the matter in the sacred writings. This divinity, how new soever it may appear to those who never before

attended to it, was taught of old by Moses, (Deut. xxvii.,) and afterwards by the apostle Paul, (Gal. iii. 10;) or rather the God of Israel is the true author of this system. It was of old revealed in the law of Moses; it was afterwards honored with the highest honors, on the cross, by the blood of God's own Son; and it was considered as fundamental in that scheme of religion which the apostles preached and wrote under divine inspiration. And to be an enemy to this law, is to be an enemy to God himself, who is its author, and whose image it bears; and to his Son, who died to do it honor.

To say that this law ceases to be binding, is to say, that God ceases to be God, or that we cease to be his creatures. For if God is God, and we are his creatures, we ought to glorify him as God, and pay the honor to him that creatures owe to their Creator, unless he has done something to forfeit our love and obedience, or we cease to be moral agents. But to say that the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth has hurt his character, by any part of his conduct, is to say, that he is not an absolutely perfect being; which is the same as to say, that he is not God. Nor can we throw the blame off from ourselves, by saying, that we cease to be moral agents, without casting it on our Maker; for either he is to blame for continuing this law in force, armed with its curse; or we are to blame for breaking this law, and deserve the threatened woe. And to say that it is not in force, is expressly to contradict divine revelation, which says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But,—

10. For God in his holy law to require holiness, and nothing but holiness, of the Christless sinner, and curse him for the least defect, is inconsistent with requiring of him something besides holiness, namely, sin; and promising by covenant, to bless him with great blessings, on condition he performs the sinful action required; for this is to bless, and to curse the same man, at the same time, for the same action. Those very actions of the Christless sinner, who hath no righteousness but his own, in which to appear before God; which by the law he is under, justly deserve, and really expose him to present damnation, cannot, at the same time, qualify him, in the sight of the same God, considered as searcher of hearts, for any blessings whatever. For that which merits God's eternal curse, considered in itself, cannot, considered in itself, qualify for God's blessing, unless that which is in itself infinitely odious in the sight of God, is a meet qualification for a token of the divine favor. Besides, he who is by divine constitution, at this present moment, liable to be struck dead and sent to hell, without time to breathe one

breath more, for doing as he does, cannot, by divine constitution, be entitled to any one blessing by those doings; for this would imply two divine constitutions, in their own nature inconsistent, both in force at the same time, the one cursing, and the other blessing, the same sinner, at the same time, for the same action; which is the same thing, as to suppose a thing to be, and not to be, in the same sense, at the same time; which is an express contradiction.

Objection. If this reasoning is just, then God is at liberty to kill and damn all the ungodly now at this present time before the elect are called in; and so before Christ has seen his seed, and the travail of his soul. And so God was at liberty to have killed and damned every unregenerate sinner in the congregation of Israel, while in Egypt; and so the promise to Abraham, that at the end of four hundred and thirty years his seed should be brought out of Egypt, might have never been fulfilled. Or he might have killed and damned every ungenerate sinner, in any period afterwards; and the very ancestors of the Messiah himself might have been cut off; and so that great promise to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," might have never been accomplished.

Answer. Christ Jesus may have a covenant right to "see his seed," and "the travail of his soul;" and yet the self-righteous sinner may be under the curse of the law, in perfect consistency. Both these are Scripture doctrines, and both are perfectly harmonious. God may not be at liberty, with respect to Christ Jesus, to kill and damn every unregenerate sinner now in the world; because this would be inconsistent with his promise to him; but yet, with respect to unregenerate sinners themselves, God is at liberty; because God hath made no promise to unregenerate sinners, as such, by which they can any one of them now on earth claim a covenant right to an exemption from the curse of the law, one single moment.

Again, Abraham might have a covenant right to a posterity in number like the stars and like the sands, because God promised this to him; and so, on the same ground, he might have a covenant right to the land of Canaan, and to all the blessings comprised in God's covenant with him; and yet such of his posterity as refused to walk in his steps, and rejected the covenant of grace, and remained under the curse of the law, might have for their part no covenant right to any one blessing; but rather lie exposed to all the curses written in God's book. And that this was in fact the case, is plain from the whole tenor of Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxvii. and xxviii.

Now, if these things are true, then it will follow, —

1. That Christless sinners, as they have no covenant right to any good, being by the curse of the law already sentenced to all evil, so all the good which they do receive from God, before they are united to Christ by faith, are, as to them, the fruits of the mere sovereign grace of God, which he is at liberty, with respect to them, to continue or take away at pleasure. Thus it is as to life and all the comforts of life; and thus it is as to all the outward means of salvation, and the inward strivings of the Spirit. Every Christless sinner being under the curse of the divine law, God is at full liberty, with respect to them, to strike them dead, and send them to hell at any moment; and so put an eternal end to all the good which they enjoy, and let in all evil upon them like a flood. — See this sentiment illustrated at large in Ezekiel xx. And if this is true, then, —

2. The carnal, unregenerate, Christless Israelites, under the Mosaic dispensation, being under the curse of their law, agreeable to Deut. xxvii. 26, and Gal. iii. 10, had, considered as such, no covenant right to one blessing of the Abrahamic covenant, no, not so much as to draw a breath, or live one moment in the promised land where all the peculiar blessings of that dispensation were to be enjoyed; but God was at full and perfect liberty, with respect to them, to strike them dead, and send them to hell at any moment; and so forever separate them from that good land, and from all the worldly good things and religious advantages, which were there to be enjoyed. And on this hypothesis, and on this hypothesis alone, can the divine conduct toward that people be vindicated. For in fact he always did strike dead and send to hell impenitent sinners, under that dispensation, at what time he pleased, according to his own sovereign pleasure, just as he hath done ever since; and that he had a right so to do, by the constitution which they were under, is evident from Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxvii. xxviii. Ezek. xx. And accordingly we may observe, that by the divine appointment, the whole congregation of Israel were obliged to acknowledge this as soon as ever they entered into the holy land, in a most public, solemn, and affecting manner, saying, with united voices, *Amen*. (Deut. xxvii. 2—26.) And as soon as they entered into the holy land, they did acknowledge it, according to the divine appointment. (Josh. viii. 30—35.) So that while in an impenitent, unpardoned state, they by their own acknowledgment were under the curse of their law, at the sovereign mercy of their God. And thus the Mosaic dispensation was of old understood; but in later ages, the Pharisees by their false glosses put another sense upon their whole law, justifying themselves, and supporting their claims of having God

for their Father, whereby the nation were prepared to reject the gospel of Jesus Christ; whereas, had they retained the ancient meaning of their law like a schoolmaster, it might have led them to Christ. As this view of things, if agreeable to truth, will without more ado settle the present controversy, so it is worthy of a particular consideration.

3. No unregenerate, Christless sinner hath, as such, any right, in entering into covenant, to promise and engage "to obey the whole will of God by divine assistance," because they have no title to "the divine assistance," for any one holy act. Indeed, it is their duty to "obey the whole will of God;" and they are justly liable, in the judgment of Him whose judgment is according to truth, to the curse threatened, if they continue not in all things; and that on the foot of mere law, which promiseth no assistance at all to any sinner. And while sinners reject Christ and the grace of the gospel, they have, by the divine constitution, no title to any inward assistance of the Holy Spirit at all, on the foot of the covenant of grace; for all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, yea, and in him amen. (2 Cor. i. 20.) But as to those who are out of Christ, they are under the law; and sin hath dominion over them. (Rom. vi. 14.) This is their standing, and this is their true and real state. They are bound to perfect obedience, they are considered as moral agents, they are held to be without excuse. (Rom. i. 21.) They stand guilty before God. (Rom. iii. 19.) They reject the grace of the gospel. Eternal death is threatened for every transgression, by the divine law, (Gal. iii. 10,) and the gospel doth not make void, but establish the law, (Rom. iii. 31;) as it is written, "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 18, 36.) And so every impenitent, Christ-rejecting sinner lies at the sovereign mercy of God; as it is written, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

Death and damnation may fill them with terror, and beget reformations, tears, vows, and promises; and so, in the language of the apostle, they may bring forth fruit unto death. For *Death*, coming into the view of their consciences, begets all the religious exercises of their hearts, and is the father of the children they bring forth. And this, according to St. Paul, is the state of all those who are married to the law; for sin still hath dominion over them while under the law. But when once they are married unto Christ, they become temples of the Holy Ghost, and so now they bring forth fruit unto God. God is the Father of all the holy exercises of their hearts; he works in them to will and to do, and so all Christian graces are not only called, but in reality are the fruits of the Spirit. Law, death, and hell, will

not beget one holy exercise in an unregenerate heart; rather they will irritate the corruption of the carnal mind. (Rom. vii. 5, 8, 9.) Hence the sinner who, while ignorant of law, death, and hell, hath a good heart, as he imagines, when these come into view, his goodness is lost, his heart grows worse; and so far as he can discern, he grows worse and worse; until all his hope of acceptance with God, on the foot of law, languishes and dies. So that the law which was ordained unto life, and by which life was originally to be obtained, he finds to be unto death; as it is written, (Rom. vii. 8, 9,) "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment," raged the more, "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead, for I was alive without the law once;" and had a good opinion of myself; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." For it is not the design of God by legal conviction to make the heart better, or so much as to excite one holy thought or holy desire in the unregenerate sinner; but rather to give such light to the conscience, as that all those thoughts and desires which used to be accounted holy, may appear to have no holiness in them, but to be of a nature contrary thereunto; to the end that the sinner who is in fact dead in sin, and at enmity against God, may come to know the truth; and so find himself condemned, lost, and undone by the very law by which he sought and expected life. Thus, as, by the covenant of works, sinners have no title to any divine assistance, so, while unregenerate, God doth in fact never assist them to one holy act. Nor under genuine conviction do they seem to themselves to grow better, but on the contrary to grow worse and worse, until they find themselves perfectly destitute of every good thought, and of every good desire, and in a state of mind "wholly opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil," in the language of our confession of faith; or in the more accurate and expressive language of Scripture, until they find themselves "dead in sin," and at "enmity against God;" that is, until they see themselves to be as in fact they are, and as in fact they always were before they saw it. But to see themselves dead in sin, and enemies to God, and wholly inexcusable, and altogether criminal in being so, and on this foot justly condemned, is what, above all things, impenitent, self-justifying sinners are averse unto; and therefore their hearts, instead of concurring to promote this conviction, do resist the light, and twist and turn every possible way to evade it; and often even rise and fight against it, with horrid blasphemous thoughts. And it is seldom that awakened sinners are brought to a thorough conviction*.

* "It is not enough for men to see that they can do nothing of themselves. Men may say that, when they only find need of assistance, and not of the infusion of a principle of grace into them." — *Stoddard's Safety*, p. 183.

More generally they have some partial conviction, and some short terrors, and then false humiliations, and then false light and joy, which lasts a while, and then all their inward religion is at an end; or else, without receiving any comfort, true or false, they gradually lose their convictions, and go to sleep again as secure as ever; "for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it." But to return:

If self-righteous, Christless sinners, while under the curse of the law, have no title to divine assistance for any one holy act; and if, as was before proved, the divine law requires holiness, and nothing but holiness; then they have no warrant to "enter into covenant to obey the whole will of God by divine assistance." It is true, the gospel offers pardon to impenitent, self-righteous sinners, for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them; but impenitent, self-righteous sinners plead not guilty, in manner and form, as set forth in the divine law; and so reject the pardon offered. And it is true, the gospel offers the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to impenitent, self-righteous sinners, to enable them to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, and which is honored on the cross of Christ; but they do not desire to love it, and therefore the assistance offered is rejected. Now, when they have thus rejected the only assistance which God ever offered, to obey the very law which he hath given to be the rule of their lives, for them, under these circumstances, "to enter into covenant to obey the whole will of God *by divine assistance*," is a piece of hypocrisy suited to the character of none but such as are in fact totally depraved; and yet, at the same time, near, or quite totally blind, as to their true character and real state.

A woman, however poor and low in the world before marriage, and however insufficient to be trusted by any of her neighbors; yet no sooner is she married to a rich man who loves her, and whom she takes delight to obey and honor, but with his approbation she may trade largely at any merchant's shop for any thing she needs, and may warrantably promise, "by the assistance of her husband," to make good pay; nor will the merchant who knows her husband's riches, and his love to her, and his approbation of her conduct, be backward to trust her. And thus it is with the poor bankrupt sinner, who is in himself not sufficient for one good thought, as in him there dwelleth no good thing; as soon as he is married to Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness dwelleth, and of whose fulness he receives, and grace for grace, he may now enter into covenant with God, and warrantably promise, "by the assistance of Christ Jesus," to love God, and walk in all his ways with an upright

heart. But should a woman of an adulterous heart enter into covenant with a man of honor and of a great estate before the priest, and as soon as the ceremony was over, even on the very same day, leave his bed and board, and run off and prostitute herself to her former gallants, and refuse to return, and continue to refuse, although invited thereto by her husband, yea, obstinately refuse, notwithstanding repeated invitations and repeated offers of pardon and forgiveness, until he, being justly provoked, should advertise her in all the public papers, and forbid all to trust her on his account, for that he would hold himself unobliged to pay any of her debts, or to afford her "any assistance," until her perverse heart should be humbled, and she should confess her iniquity, and justify him in this token of his displeasure, and ask forgiveness for her crimes, and return to her duty with true matrimonial affection; and should she, on seeing what her husband had done, declare, that "to love such a husband is the same thing as to love to be advertised as a runaway in the public papers, which is to love disgrace itself, which is in its own true nature impossible, and even contrary to the law of God, which requires us to love ourselves; in this view, therefore, I can never return, nor is it my duty to return; for I ought to have a regard to my own reputation: until, therefore, he will recall this advertisement, and assume a different character, I can no more love him than I can love my own misery;" and in this temper should she go on, giving her heart to her lovers, and making herself common to all comers, until, being overtaken with extreme poverty, she is reduced to great distress; and then, instead of returning to her husband and humbling herself before him, as in duty she is bound, should she apply to her neighbors for relief, and put on a bold face, and promise, by the "assistance of her husband" to make good pay — would they regard her words? would they trust her on his account? Rather, would they not be filled with indignation at her impudence, and be ready to say, "Woman, first of all make up matters with your husband, before you presume to be trusted on his account; for what warrant have you, in your present circumstances, to promise to make good pay, by his assistance, to which you have no title, and to which you know you have no title, and to which the public knows you have no title, by the advertisement in the public papers? No, no, thou wicked woman, thy word is not to be taken. Thou art not worth a penny in the world. The man whom thou callest thy husband thou hast run away from, and he declares that he will hold himself unobliged to pay any of thy debts, or to grant thee the least assistance." She cries, she laments bitterly, she says, "I desire to love him, I wish I

could love him, I long to love him, I try to love him, but I cannot. I do all I can to love him, but it is above my power. But this I can say, that I am willing to *do my utmost*, and I am come to a *fixed resolution* to try every day to love him, and I am willing to bind myself by the most solemn covenant to do so; and more than this he cannot reasonably require at my hands, in my present circumstances." Her husband happens to stand at the door, and hears all the talk, and goes off in high indignation, saying to himself, "What! can she find a heart to love her gallants, but no heart to love me! am I so vile in her eyes! is it such an impossible task to love such a one as I am! is this more than she can do! is this more than I can justly require at her hands! am I to be pacified with her hypocritical tears and deceitful vows! and an unreasonable man to demand more at present! shall other men thus have her whole heart, and shall I bear this contempt at her hands! Far be this from me. I will assert my proper dignity; that woman shall no longer be called my wife; I will get a bill; I will put her away forever." Common sense would approve and justify his conduct.

Thus the most high God, whose character is perfect in beauty, without a blemish, might justly resolve, with respect to every impenitent, self-righteous, self-justifying sinner. And he might justly strike them dead, and send them to hell in a moment. For every plea they make to justify themselves, in not loving God, casts the blame on him; even every argument they use for their justification, is to his condemnation; for if the fault is not in them, it is in him. If they are not to blame for not loving him, it is because he is not worthy of their love; for if God is in himself, and in all his conduct, absolutely perfect, even perfect in beauty, without a blemish, then we must be inexcusable, and wholly criminal in not loving him with all our hearts. And if there is the least blemish in the divine character, or in any part of his conduct, then he is not an absolutely perfect being; that is, in other words, he is not God. The divinity of the only true and living God, is therefore denied in every self-justifying plea; which is a crime aggravated beyond expression. A sinner, therefore, in such a temper, is an enemy to the true God, and justifies himself in it, and all his pretences to love and obedience are hypocritical; and he ought to be told it in the plainest manner. But to flatter sinners along in their self-justifying, God-condemning disposition, how much soever it may please them at present, directly tends to their eternal ruin. But thus much is certain at least, that they have no title to "any divine assistance;"

and so have no warrant to make promises as though they had. Nor is their promise, in this view of it, of any worth, or at all to be trusted.

To conclude: The professed design of Mr. M.'s first book was, as he declares, "to prove that there is an external covenant between God and his visible church, as such, distinct from the covenant of grace; and that those who are in it have a promise of the means of, and the strivings of God's Holy Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation." And agreeably hereunto, he has in this second book endeavored to persuade us, that impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinners may warrantably, "while such, and as such, bind themselves in covenant by divine assistance to obey the whole will of God." Whether what has been offered in the foregoing section, is sufficient to prove that this external covenant is not from Heaven, but of men, is submitted to the consideration of every judicious reader; and we are now at liberty more particularly to examine the new scheme of religion, which he has advanced in order to support his external covenant, which is to be the principal business of most of the following sections.

SECTION VI.

Rom. viii. 7, 8. The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

THE NATURE OF THE ENMITY OF THE CARNAL MIND AGAINST GOD.

Question I. Are we, as fallen creatures, at enmity against God, merely as conceiving God to be our enemy? Or, —

Quest. II. Are we enemies only to false and mistaken ideas of God? Or, —

Quest. III. Is the carnal mind enmity against God's true and real character, and that notwithstanding the revelation which God has made of his readiness to be revealed to us, if we repent and return to him through Jesus Christ? If so, —

Quest. IV. What contrariety is there between the carnal mind and God's true and real character?

According to our author, "Adam, after the fall, before the revelation of a Mediator," was not bound by the divine law

to love God. The divine law bound him to "punishment" for what was past; but "its binding authority respected not his obedience" for the time to come; for Adam by the fall ceased to be a moral agent; for it now became inconsistent with a principle essential to moral agency to love God. For "a principle of self-love is essential to us as moral agents;" but "to delight in God under those circumstances, was the same thing as to delight in his own misery;" which is inconsistent with that self-love which is essential to moral agency. Therefore "Adam, by becoming guilty, was totally depraved;" being totally deprived of his moral agency, and wholly incapacitated for moral conduct. His depravity, however, was not of a criminal nature; for "this inconsistency of love to God, with the natural principle of self-love, was the true reason, and the only reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall;" for "could he have seen, after he had sinned, that he had still the same, or as much ground of confidence toward God as he had before, he would have continued still to exercise the same delight in the divine perfections, as he had done before." So that he was as well disposed to love God after the fall as he was before, had he been in as good external circumstances. His different affections were entirely owing to his different external circumstances; for God was his friend before the fall. But now, "in every view it must appear to him, that God could deal no otherwise with him, but to execute the curse, unless he should act contrary to his own perfections;" and therefore, as soon as God's readiness to forgive sin was manifested, there was nothing in his heart to prevent his loving God as much as ever. And so it is with us. "There is all the reason why our hearts should return to the love of God, and confidence in him through Christ, as why Adam should love God in his primitive state; there is nothing in our fallen circumstances to prevent it;" without any new principle of grace; for this being the true state of things, "regeneration may be wrought by light;" for as soon as we believe God's readiness to be reconciled to us, we shall love him of course. But before faith and regeneration, we are in the same state of total depravity that Adam was before the revelation of a Mediator. "Mankind at this day, antecedent to their exercising faith in Christ, are in much the same condition as Adam was after he had sinned;" particularly, "we are under the same inability of loving God that Adam was." And therefore, as it was not Adam's duty to love God after the fall, so the unregenerate are not bound in duty to love that character of God which was exhibited in the moral law given to Adam; for

to do so is the same thing as to love their own misery; to do which is inconsistent with moral agency, and "contrary to the law of God," which requires us to love ourselves. And the gospel does not require us to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law; "for the love of God which the gospel teacheth, is love of that divine character which is exhibited to us in a Mediator, and no other." But this character the unbeliever hath no idea of, and so cannot love it. "To suppose that the soul sees, and loves this character, before a believing view of Christ takes place in the heart, is to suppose the soul to see and not to see at the same time." And as we are not moral agents with respect to law or gospel, while unregenerate and unenlightened, nor bound in duty at present to love God, believe, or repent; so the external covenant, which requires unregenerate endeavors, and promises the strivings of the Holy Spirit to render external means effectual to salvation, comes in here to our relief. And our "total depravity," and our "enmity against God," not being of a criminal nature, are no bar in the way of our admission to sealing ordinances. And therefore, although a man who steals but a shilling, and justifies himself in it, must be debarred, yet he who is totally depraved, and an enemy to God, and justifies himself in it, may be admitted. This is the sum of Mr. M.'s scheme. Now, that we, while unregenerate, are moral agents, has already been proved. And the nature of that enmity against God, which is in the carnal mind, is to be considered in this section, which may be done in answer to the questions proposed; and then the way will be prepared to consider the nature of that reconciliation to God, to which the gospel calls us, which is to be the subject of the next section. Now, therefore, let us attend to the questions.

Question I. Are we, as fallen creatures, enemies to God, merely as conceiving God to be our enemy?

Answer. As likeliness of nature lays the foundation for liking, so contrariety of nature is the original ground of dislike; or that in which enmity radically consists.* And therefore, our enmity

* There are some sinners who do not know enough about God sensibly to love him or hate him, or to have any exercise of heart relative to him. God is not in all their thoughts. They never hated him in their lives, they will tell you; nor did they ever feel any love to him, or delight in him. The divine character, as yet, never came near enough to their view to give them pleasure or pain. The fool saith in his heart, There is no God. They wonder, therefore, what can be meant by the apostle's words, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Surely, say they, he does not mean that every natural man hates God, for I never hated him in my life. For let our sinful nature be ever so contrary to God's holy nature, yet the contrariety will not be felt until the true and real character of the Holy One of Israel begins to come into clear view. "For without the law sin was dead; but when the commandment came, sin revived." This contrariety which is between our sinful nature and God's holy nature, is the thing chiefly

to God does not arise merely from conceiving God to be our enemy. Here let these things be considered: —

1. If our enmity against God arises merely from conceiving him to be our enemy; if we have no contrariety of heart to God but what arises merely from conceiving that he dislikes us; then God's dislike to us must have taken place while we were perfectly holy; or our belief that God is our enemy, is a groundless sentiment, originally injected into the human mind by the devil, the father of lies, as Mr. Sandeman supposes; but for which, we should naturally love God, be perfectly pleased with his character, and from our childhood grow up truly friendly to him. And if either of these be true, then, —

2. In order to our reconciliation to God, we need not to be born again; we need no change of nature; we only need to believe that God is become our friend; and so we may be reconciled to God by this belief; for it is an old maxim, Remove the cause and the effect will cease. And in this view the old Antinomian scheme, relative to total depravity and regeneration, is consistent. This faith, therefore, is the first act; and by this faith we are regenerated; that is, a belief of God's love to us removes the grounds of our enmity to him, and begets love, repentance, and every Christian grace.

Mr. Sandeman's scheme, which is nothing else than the old Antinomian scheme refined, and dressed up in a new attire, teaches, that the truth to be believed in justifying faith, is, "that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement for impenitent sinners." A belief of this begets hope, and love, and repentance, and every Christian grace. For on his scheme, forgiveness takes place before repentance, as it does necessarily on the Antinomian scheme, whatever shape it assumes. For on this scheme, as our enmity against God arises from conceiving God to be our enemy, so our love arises from conceiving God to be our friend; and therefore we must first of all conceive God to be our friend, before love can exist; and so before repentance can exist; and so justification must necessarily take place before repentance. This is a difficulty which neither the more ancient nor the later Antinomian writers know how to get rid of.

And thus faith, even that faith by which we are justified, takes place, in order of nature, before regeneration; for it is the cause of it. But the cause, in order of nature, is always

intended in the text; and the sense is, — The carnal mind is contrariety to the holy nature of God, as appears from this, that it is not subject to that law, which is a transcript of God's moral character, neither indeed can be, which proves the contrariety to be total, and fixed. And as the tree, such is the fruit; so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God; for God cannot be pleased with what is contrary to his own holy nature; and therefore, upon the whole, to be carnally minded, is death, which was the point to be proved. (See Rom. viii. 6—9.)

before the effect. But if faith takes place before regeneration, it is in its own nature not a holy, but a graceless, unregenerate act; for it is the act of a graceless, unregenerate heart; and so faith is not "a saving grace, but a saving sin." But can we be married to a holy Savior by an unholy act? by an act in its own nature perfectly opposite to his mediatorial character? Can we receive Christ by an act of rejection? Can we be united to Christ by an act of disunion? Can we become one with Christ by an act of sin? Perhaps it may be thought that Mr. Sandeman gets rid of this difficulty by teaching that faith is not an act; that there is no volition or exercise of heart implied in it. But nothing is gained, if, while we avoid one difficulty, we run upon another as great.

For, if it is not an act, if no volition or exercise of heart is implied in it, then we are married to Christ "without our consent;" just as Mr. Mather supposes that the Israelites, on the plains of Moab, were taken into covenant "without their consent." But this is inconsistent with the very notion of marriage; which is a transaction which implies the mutual consent of both parties; and therefore, on this scheme, the marriage union, as it takes place among mankind, could not be used, with any propriety, to represent our union to Christ by faith. For if the soul is married to Christ at all, the consent of our hearts must be implied; or, to use Mr. Stoddard's words, "when the soul marries to Christ, he doth it with a spirit of love; this act of faith doth include all other graces. It is virtually all grace." — *Nature of Conversion*, p. 19—24. (See Rom. vii. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Eph. v. 19, 30. John xvi. 27.) But can we be married to Christ by an act of sin? But if justifying faith is the act of an unregenerate heart, dead in sin, totally depraved, then it is an act of sin; for as is the tree, such is the fruit; as is the fountain, such are the streams; as is the heart, such are its acts. Besides, if justifying faith is the act of an unregenerate sinner, then it is the act of an impenitent sinner; and then pardon is, in order of nature, before repentance. And so it is not necessary that we repent of our sins, in order to our being forgiven; which is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, and to the plainest and most express declarations of Almighty God. Pray, reader, stop a minute, take your Bible, and turn to, and read, Lev. xxvi. 40—42. 1 Kings viii. 47—50. Ps. xxxii. 3—5. Prov. xxviii. 13. Isai. lv. 7. Jer. iv. 4. Ezek. xviii. 30—32. Luke iii. 3; v. 31, 32; xiii. 5; xxiv. 47. Acts ii. 37, 38; iii. 19; v. 31; x. 21. And then lay your hand on your heart, and say, Does God offer to pardon impenitent sinners, while such? Did the Son of God die that pardon might be granted to impenitent sinners, as such?

Or can God, consistent with the gospel, forgive the impenitent, while such, and as such, any more than if Christ never had died? If any doctrine tends to delude sinners, it is this — that they may expect pardon without repentance. They have no heart to repent; they wish to escape punishment; they hope they shall escape: if they can believe that they shall escape, it will give them joy. This doctrine is suited to give joy to an impenitent heart. But to teach impenitent sinners, that they may expect pardon without repentance toward God, is as contrary to Scripture, as it is to teach them, that they may expect pardon without faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine of pardon before repentance, had been taught; yea, it had spread far and wide. This occasioned the Assembly of divines at Westminster expressly to assert the contrary. "Repentance is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it." In fine, if the first act of justifying faith is an unregenerate, graceless, sinful act, so are all succeeding acts of the same faith; and if so, then to live a life of faith on the Son of God, as the holy apostle Paul says he did, (Gal. ii. 20,) is to live a life of unregenerate, graceless, sinful acts. For it is an agreed point, that the first act, and the succeeding acts of justifying faith, are of the same nature and kind; and so a life of faith is a life of sin, a course of unregenerate, graceless acts. And this graceless faith will bring forth selfish, graceless fruits. All our love and joy will arise merely from self-love; in a belief that our sins are pardoned, and that God loves us. The holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, exhibited in that law which is holy, just, and good, (Rom. vii. 12,) which Christ loved and honored, living and dying, instead of appearing perfect in beauty, without a blemish, in our eyes, can never be thought of with pleasure; we never can say with David, "O, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day." In a word, as our faith is of the Antinomian kind, so our whole hearts will be all over Antinomian. No wonder "ninety-nine in a hundred" of such converts are in the dark about their good estate; and feel as much need of an external, graceless covenant, as though they never had been converted.

A late writer, in order to prove, "*fide nos regenerari*," that we are regenerated by faith, quotes Gal. iii. 26: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." But this text speaks not of regeneration, but of adoption. Again he refers to John vi. 53: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Just as if eating and drinking were acts of the dead, and not of the living. Just as if the dead might eat and drink while they are dead, and by so doing be made alive. However, this is certain, that that is a

dead corpse, and not a living man, which neither eats nor drinks. He who does not live a life of faith in Christ, is dead in sin; yet still "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," are acts of spiritual life, and not of spiritual death.

However, it is granted that there is a kind of faith which may be exercised by a graceless, unregenerate, impenitent sinner. For such a one, although he rejects Christ Jesus with his whole heart, yet he may firmly believe that God loves him, and that his sins are forgiven, and be ravished in this belief. But the thing believed is a lie; and all the affections which result from this belief are founded in delusion. And yet, this is the very thing which is sometimes called regeneration by faith, and beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And it was one chief design of President Edwards's Treatise concerning Religious Affections, to show the difference between true religion and this kind of delusion. But to return: —

3. If a belief that God is become our friend, without any change of nature, will reconcile us to God, then Satan, transformed into an angel of light, is able to do the business. For when the sinner is terrified with the thoughts of death and hell, Satan can bring to his mind such texts as these: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" and at the same time strike the sinner's imagination with a view of heaven, of God upon a throne, of Christ sitting at his right hand, till every doubt is banished, and until the sinner cries out in transport, "I believe, I believe."

4. If our enmity against God arises only from conceiving God to be our enemy, then all those graceless, deluded sinners, who believe that God loves them, are truly regenerate; that is, the love to God, which they experience in this belief, is true love. For, as the cause of our enmity is believing God to be our enemy, so, in every instance where the cause is removed, the effect will cease. But in all deluded sinners, who believe that God loves them, the supposed cause of enmity is removed, and accordingly they really think that they love God. Thus gross Socinians, who deny the eternity of hell torments, who believe the universal salvation of devils and damned, and in this belief view God as the friend of the whole intelligent system, all made up of love to his creatures, do, in this view of his character, love him, and so are all of them, on this scheme, truly reconciled to God: rather, these men, if they were instructed in these principles from their childhood, and believed them, were never totally depraved; for they always loved God. And accordingly we find they universally deny the doctrine of total depravity;

and say, that it is natural for all mankind to love God; and that in fact they all would love him, were his true and real character brought into their view. And so would the devils too, on this scheme, were the divine character what the Socinians suppose it to be. And while Socinians love God, viewed as they view him, Antinomians, of the grossest sort, whose faith professedly consists in a belief that God loves them, are often full of love to God, in this view of him. And why may not Socinians and Antinomians have charity for each other? for their schemes are not so different in reality as in appearance; for both look upon God as a lovely being; and both love him; and both profess to love him "for the transcendent excellency of his perfections." The one does this, because God loves all, and so loves him; the other, because, although God does not love all, yet he loves him in particular. And why is not the love of the one of as good a kind as the love of the other? And the Pharisees, concerning whom Christ declared, that the love of God was not in them, (John v. 42,) and who hated and crucified the Son of God, ought also to be received to charity, on this scheme; for they really believed that God was their Father and their Friend, and in this belief, they experienced this kind of love, of which we are speaking. Yea, our charity ought to be more extensive still.

5. For on this scheme they who are totally depraved, have as much of a principle of grace, as they that are regenerate; that is, sinners are at heart as well disposed to love God, before regeneration, as after; for after regeneration they are disposed to love God, only considered as one that loves them; and before regeneration, they are disposed to love God, considered and viewed in this light; for it is written, "Sinners love those that love them;" and they need no new principle of grace to incline them to it. And so the unregenerate only need light to see that God loves them; and could they but have this light, they would love God as much as others; and therefore, —

6. On this scheme, Satan's charge against Job, that he was at heart no better than other men, was true and just; and the high commendation which God had given of him, that there was none like him in the earth, was without reason. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth; a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." As if he had said, "No wonder he loves

God, while God is so full of love and kindness to him; and who is there under the like circumstances that would not love God as much as he does?" "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face;" "just as we fallen spirits have done, ever since we were turned out of heaven. And therefore this Job, who is commended as a nonesuch, has in reality no more grace in his heart than we have." And if the enmity of fallen creatures against God arises only from conceiving him to be their enemy, and their love only from conceiving God to be their friend, Satan's reasoning was just. All Job's seeming superior goodness was entirely owing to the more abundant tokens of the divine love; and therefore he would have turned to be like the devil, in an instant, if God had only touched all that he had. He would have cursed God to the face.

7. On this scheme, indeed, Adam had no more grace before the fall than he had after; but his different affections toward the Deity were entirely owing to the different external circumstances which he was under. For, on this scheme, before the fall God loved him, and so he loved God; and after the fall, had God continued to love him, he would have continued to love God also; for the "true reason, and the only reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall, was because, as he thought, God was become his irreconcilable enemy. As soon as he found out his mistake, and perceived that God was ready to be reconciled, he returned to the love of his Maker, without any new principle of grace." Before the fall, that principle of self-love, which, according to Mr. M., was "essential to him as a moral agent," naturally inclined him to love God with all his heart, as his greatest good." And after the fall, this same principle did as naturally incline him to hate God with all his heart, as his greatest evil. His love and his hatred arose from the very same principle; and his different affections were entirely owing to his different external circumstances. As soon, therefore, as his external circumstances were altered, and God became friendly again, he immediately returned to the love of God, without any new principle of grace; "there was nothing in his fallen circumstances to prevent it," according to Mr. M. Adam therefore, on this scheme, had no more grace before the fall than after. It is true, the fall made an alteration in his external circumstances, which different external circumstances occasioned different affections; even as it was with the Israelites at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned, and their expectations of a prosperous journey to the land of Canaan were raised very high, they were full of love, and joy, and praise; but three days after, when they came to the waters of Marah, they murmured; and that from the same principle from which they before rejoiced. It is true,

they had different affections toward God at these different times; but the true and only reason was their different external circumstances, for they had no more grace at the one time than at the other. And thus it was with Adam, on Mr. M.'s scheme.

8. On this scheme, there is no essential difference between the nature of Satan and the nature of Gabriel; but their different affections, and different conduct, arise merely from the different external circumstances which they are in; for there is no higher principle than self-love in either. The one looks on God as an enemy, and so hates him merely in that view; and the other looks upon God as a friend, and so loves him merely in that view. And thus their natures are exactly alike, and their different affections and conduct arise merely from the different external circumstances which they are under. And thus Satan stands justified in his enmity against God; and thus the holy angels are degraded to a level with devils. For Satan might say, "To love God in my circumstances would be to love my own misery; but to take delight in misery, to take pleasure in pain, is a contradiction; and is in its own nature impossible; therefore I am not to blame. And as to the angels, who dwell in heaven, do they fear God for nought, in the paradise above, surrounded with every blessing? Far from it. But let God put forth his hand now, and touch all that they have, and they will curse him to his face, just as we do."

Thus much in answer to the first question; and to prepare the way for the second, we may observe, that Mr. M. says, speaking of Adam after the fall, "In every view, it must appear to him that God could deal no otherwise with him, but to execute the curse, unless he should act contrary to his divine and glorious perfections;" and "to delight in God, in this case, was the same thing as to delight in his own misery;" and "this was the true reason, and the only reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall." But Adam soon found he was mistaken; for it soon appeared that God knew how to open a way to pardon sinners, "consistent with his divine and glorious perfections."

Quest. II. Are we, as fallen creatures, enemies only to false and mistaken ideas of the Deity?

Ans. If we are enemies only to false and mistaken ideas of the Deity, then it will follow, that we have no enmity against God's true and real character, even none at all; but rather are in a disposition to love it as soon as known. Nor shall we need any inward influence of the Holy Spirit at all, to dispose us to the knowledge of it; for we shall not be averse to the knowledge of it, as not being at all prejudiced against it. In this case, we shall not hate the light, but love and receive it with all our hearts, of our

own accord; and therefore, if the external manifestations of God's true character are sufficiently clear, we shall know it, and we shall love it. And, on this hypothesis, had God given mankind, from the beginning of the world, an external exhibition of his true character, sufficiently full and plain, all mankind would have known and loved him from the beginning of the world. So that the great and general depravity of mankind, and the wickedness which hath overspread the earth, in all ages, have been entirely owing to God's not giving a sufficient external revelation of his true and real character to the children of men. But they are not to blame for this. If there be any blame at all, it lies at his door, who hath neglected to let his true and real character be known; for had he but revealed it to mankind, they, having no prejudice against it, but being naturally disposed to love it, would of course have attended to the revelation with good and honest hearts, and would have understood it, and have brought forth fruit accordingly. How to justify the divine conduct, in this view of things, I do not know. Nor can I tell how to justify the conduct of Moses and the prophets, of Christ Jesus and his apostles, who were commissioned to reveal God's true character to men, in suffering both God, and themselves for his sake, to be hated, when things, if this scheme is true, were so circumstanced, that if they had but plainly told the truth, all would have understood it, believed it, loved and obeyed it; and they would have been the most universally beloved of any persons in the world. If mankind, with respect to God's true and real character, stand affected as Mr. Sandeman represents, even as the inhabitants of an island perishing with hunger do, with respect to a large importation of corn, the news of which would spread like lightning from end to end of the island, and give hope and joy to all the inhabitants at once, then had Jesus of Nazareth and his apostles plainly revealed the Father's character to mankind, the news would have spread over the earth, and would have filled the world with joy; and these bringers of good tidings had been the delight of all nations. Why then did they suffer themselves to be hated, persecuted, murdered, for nothing! yea, for worse than nothing; even for secreting the true and real character of God, which they were sent expressly to reveal.

To say, that they did plainly reveal God's true and real character, but mankind did not understand them right, is to say, either the revelation was not on a level with the natural capacities of mankind, and so was not plain enough, not so plain as it ought to have been to answer the end; and so these divine teachers were blameworthy; or else their not understanding the revelation aright must be owing to their being at enmity against

God's true and real character, which was revealed; for if the revelation was plain enough, and if they had no prejudice to blind their minds, they must have understood it. Nothing could have prevented a right understanding of the revelation but bad and dishonest hearts, by which they were inclined to hate the light and truth itself; for every good and honest heart would have understood the revelation, believed and loved it, and brought forth fruit. (Luke viii. 15.)

Quest. III. Is the carnal mind enmity against God's true and real character; and that notwithstanding the plain and most express revelation, which God has made of his readiness to be reconciled to us, if we repent and return to him through Jesus Christ?

Ans. If God would forgive us without repentance, we should like him; as in this, he would yield us every point in contest, and implicitly take the whole blame to himself. Or, in other words, if God would give up his law, we would give up our enmity against him; as in this he would do as we would have him do, and implicitly become altogether such a one as we are; or, which amounts to the same thing, if God will give up that character of himself exhibited in the moral law, and allow us to hate it, and yet love us, then we will like him; as in this he would justify us in our wickedness. But if he asserts his own dignity, abides by his law, and vindicates the honor of his character exhibited in it, and obliges us from the heart to acknowledge him to be wholly right, and ourselves to be wholly wrong, to repent and take the whole blame to ourselves, and ask forgiveness as of mere grace through Jesus Christ, then his character will not suit a carnal mind. In a word, if God will forgive us without repentance, then we can love him without any change of nature; but otherwise our enmity will remain. For his offering pardon, in the name of Christ, upon repentance, will not pacify the heart of an impenitent, self-justifying sinner, and induce him to become a willing and obedient subject to the divine government.

Before the foundation of the world, the fall of man being foreseen, God had contrived a method in which he might, consistently with his perfections, pardon and receive to favor the true penitent; and no sooner had man fallen, but he revealed his designs of mercy to our first parents, that they might inform their posterity; and instituted sacrifices as a shadow of the great atonement. So that all mankind were under sufficient external advantages from the beginning of the world, to have known that God is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. And yet soon it came to pass, not only that Cain

slew his brother, but that the whole earth was filled with violence.

After the flood, mankind, in a body, soon cast off the true God, and idolatry spread over the face of the earth; for "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." At this time, that he might not leave himself without witness, God took one nation and set them up as a beacon on a hill, in the sight of all the nations; and to them, in the sight of all the world around them, he exhibited his true and real character, and laid them under every possible obligation to love him, and to walk in his ways, that they might be to him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, in the sight of all the nations; that they might yet have opportunity to return to the true God; but the nations around hated the God of Israel, and even the Israelites would not hear, (Jer. xiii. 10;) yea, the Israelites cast off their God, whom they did not like, and joined with the heathen around them in the worship of Baal, Ashtaroth, and Dagon, gods whom they did like; and this notwithstanding God himself used all external means that were proper, and the most wisely adapted, to induce them to love him, and to walk in his ways, from the day he took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, always giving them the highest assurances of his readiness to forgive all past offences, and in the highest sense to be a God to them, if they would walk in his ways indeed; but they would not hear. So that after the experiments of many ages, and a great variety of means contrived and used by infinite wisdom, God was at length obliged to cast them off; but not until he had tried every external means, which with propriety could be tried; not until he could say, "What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" for he sent unto them all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending; and they stoned one, and killed another. At last he sent to them his only son, and they slew him. And in them we have exhibited a true specimen of human nature, in its present fallen state.*

Since the Jews have been cast off, God has sent the gospel to the Gentiles, and for seventeen hundred years has been making experiments on them, as of old he did on the Jews; and such

* "As *face answereth to face in water, so doth the heart of man to man.* — If they were in Cain's circumstances, and God should suffer them, they would do as he did. If they were in Pharaoh's circumstances, and left of God, they would be as cruel, false, and hardhearted, as he. If they were in the like circumstances with Doeg, though they condemn him for his hypocrisy, flattery, and cruelty, they would do every whit as bad as he. If they were in like circumstances as Judas was, whatever indignation they have against him, they would be as false and impudent, and as very traitors, as he. Yea, if they were under the circumstances that the fallen angels are, they would be as very devils as they. That original sin that reigns in every natural man is the fountain of every abomination." — *Mr. Stoddard, Nature of Conversion.*

has been their opposition to God, and Christ, and Christianity, in all ages, that agreeable to revelation made to John in the Isle of Patmos, the true church of Christ hath been in circumstances, either like a woman in travail, with a great red dragon before her, ready to devour her child as soon as born; or like a woman obliged to flee, as upon eagle's wings, into a wilderness to hide herself from the face of the dragon, (Rev. xii.;) or like two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, who are killed from age to age, for the testimony they bear to God and the truth, and in whose sufferings they that dwell upon the earth rejoice. (Rev. xi.) And now, after a course of the most obstinate rebellion for almost six thousand years, it is become a question among us rebels and enemies, whether we are at enmity against God's true and real character, or not. After we have cast off the true God, and set up false gods all over the earth; after we have stoned the messengers of God, and killed his prophets, and murdered his Son; and after his followers have, according to his prediction, been hated of all men for his name's sake; even now, after all these exercises and fruits of enmity, it is become a question, whether we are, or ever were, properly and strictly speaking, enemies to God's true and real character! So slow of heart are we to understand our own true character and real state. But that the carnal mind is enmity against God's true and real character, may be proved by these arguments: —

1. If the carnal mind is enmity against God himself, then the carnal mind is enmity against God's true and real character. But the carnal mind is enmity against God himself; as is asserted by the inspired apostle; for he says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." But to be enmity against false and mistaken notions of the Deity, is not to be enmity against God; for to hate falsehood is not to hate the truth. To hate false gods, is not to hate the true God; but that being whom Paul called God, was the true God. To deny this, is to give up the whole of divine revelation. To say, that Paul's God was not the true God, is to say that the God of the Bible is not the true God.

2. That which is opposite unto a true and real transcript of the moral character of God, is opposite to his true and real character. But the carnal mind is opposite unto the divine law, which is a true and real transcript of the moral character of God; this is the apostle's argument. For in order to prove that the carnal mind is enmity against God, he says, "For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

3. To be at enmity against false and mistaken notions of God is no sin, and deserves no punishment; but rather is virtuous

and praiseworthy; for even God himself hates all false gods, and all mistaken notions about the true God. But if the Scripture account of things be true, that enmity against God and Christ, which mankind have discovered, is the most inexcusable wickedness; for it is spoken of by our blessed Savior as such, (Matt. x. 16, 25; xxiii. 29—36. John xv. 22—25;) and, as such, it deserves the wrath of God. "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." Besides, had not the Pharisees been at enmity against the true and real character of God, and of his Son, and inexcusably to blame on that account, those words of Christ to them had been very abusive — "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" But if they were as venomous as serpents, and as spiteful as vipers toward the true God and his Son, the damnation of hell was good enough for them.

Remark 1. If the carnal mind is enmity only against mistaken ideas of God, but disposed to love God's true and real character, as soon as known, then nothing more is needful to bring us to love God perfectly, even with all our hearts, than a right speculative idea of him, commonly called doctrinal knowledge, or head knowledge; for if we are naturally disposed to love God's true character, then as soon as we know it, we shall love it, just as Jacob loved Rachel the first time he saw her. And our love will, on this hypothesis, increase in exact proportion to our doctrinal knowledge; and we shall need the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, to give us a heart to love God, no more than Jacob did, to give him a heart to love Rachel. An external revelation of God's true character, sufficiently clear and plain, is all that will be needful to beget perfect love to God in our hearts. And then we may be regenerated, and perfectly sanctified by light, without any internal influences of the Spirit of God at all. And this is what Pelagians and Socinians really mean.

Rem. 2. If the carnal mind is enmity against God, only as conceiving him to be our enemy, as one who will damn us, then a belief that he is our friend, and will save us, will cause our enmity to cease, and beget love, without any change of nature in us. And then again, we may be regenerated by light. And this is what Antinomians really mean. And were there any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, of the fact to be believed, no Spirit would be needed in this case. But because there is no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, as the celebrated Mr. Marshall honestly owns, therefore some spirit is

needed; but not the Spirit of God, for it is not the office of the Spirit of God to enable us to believe that to be true which was not true before we believed it. But God is not our reconciled friend while out of Christ; nor does pardon ever take place before repentance. When the unregenerate, impenitent sinner has it discovered to him that God loves him, and is reconciled to him, the thing discovered is a lie; and the father of lies is the author of the discovery. But of this heretofore, in "A Blow at the Root of the Refined Antinomianism of the Present Age."

Rem. 3. If the carnal mind is enmity against God's true and real character, as exhibited in the moral law, and as honored with the highest honors on the cross of Christ, notwithstanding the fullest and plainest declarations of God's readiness to be reconciled to us through Christ, if we repent and return to God through him, then the clearest possible speculative idea of this character will not beget love; the greatest possible degree of doctrinal knowledge will not render God amiable in our eyes. For if the true and real character of God itself is odious to a carnal heart, the idea of that character will excite, not love, but dislike: if the true and real character of Jesus was odious to the heart of a Pharisee, the idea of that character would excite, in the Pharisee's heart, not love, but dislike. So reason teaches; and so the fact was. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." The longer Christ lived, the more he preached, the plainer he spake, the more the Pharisees hated him; for his character was perfectly opposite to theirs. But every impenitent, self-righteous sinner hath the heart of a Pharisee; therefore Christ's words to Nicodemus are equally true with respect to all mankind in their natural state — "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Rem. 4. Spiritual life is, according to Scripture, communicated by God to the dead soul, to enable it to see and act in a spiritual manner; for, according to Scripture, we are dead in sin; as perfectly dead as the body of Christ was when it lay in the grave; and the same power which raised that from the dead, doth raise us from spiritual death. (Eph. i. 19—23; ii. 1—10.) And we know, that a dead corpse must be restored to life, in order of nature, before it can see or hear. So the Scripture teaches us, that spiritual life is necessary to enable us to see and act in a spiritual manner; for those who are spiritually dead are spiritually blind. They cannot discern, they cannot know spiritual things, spiritually. (1 Cor. ii. 14.) They are foolishness to them, and a stumbling-block. (1 Cor. i. 18, 23, 24.) As the veil on Moses' face hid the glory of it from the congregation of Israel, (Exod. xxxiv. 29—35,) so the spirit-

ual glory of God and the things of God are hid from the natural man, by a veil on his heart. (2 Cor. iii. 13—18.) For that enmity to divine things, in which spiritual death consists, implies spiritual blindness. (Rom. viii. 7. Eph. iv. 18.) For an idea of the glory of God is always attended with love to God. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Enmity against God, therefore, implies that we are blind to his glory; yea, that his true and real character, instead of appearing glorious, and giving pleasure to the mind, appears odious, and excites disagreeable and painful sensations. (Rom. i. 28. John xv. 18—25.) It is not the design of the gospel to accommodate the divine character to the taste of the carnal heart. (Rom. iii. 31.) But on the contrary, the flesh must die; it must be put to death; it must be crucified, (Gal. v. 17—24;) and a new, divine, spiritual life must be communicated to the soul to enable it to see and act in a spiritual manner; for "except a man be born again, he cannot see," nor "enter into the kingdom of God." He must be born again, or he cannot see the glory of Christianity, or cordially embrace it. A man may be a Pharisee, as was Nicodemus; so a man may be a Socinian, a Pelagian, an Arminian, or an Antinomian, without regeneration; but no man can be a Christian, except he be born again. Experience and fact confirm the truth; for when Christ was on earth, he spake as never man spake; and yet the spiritual glory of Christianity was hid from their eyes. (Matt. xi. 20—25.) For although he came, not to those who had been bred up in pagan darkness, but to his own people, who had received their education under Moses and the prophets, yet his own received him not. Not one received him, not one believed in his name, but such as were born of God. (John i. 11—13.) So that it was indeed a universal maxim among the apostolic converts, that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, (not *will be*, but *gegenetai*,) *hath been* born of God. (1 John v. 1.) For this word, in this tense, ever hath this signification, in the writings of this apostle, as every man of learning may see, who will look into the original. See 1 John ii. 19; iii. 9; iv. 7; v. 1, 4, 18; and John viii. 41; ix. 32.) None, therefore, but those to whom good and honest hearts are thus given, understand the word and bring forth fruit. (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Luke viii. 12—15.) But these all "with open face, (the veil being taken off,) beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." (2 Cor. iii. 13—18.) For the truth, being spiritually understood, that is, seen in its glory, is cordially believed, (2 Cor. iv. 3—6;) and the truth, being seen in its glory and believed, produces every answerable effect in heart and life. (John xvii. 17. 1

Cor. iv. 15. 1 Pet. i. 3, 23. Jam. i. 18.) Thus this matter is represented in the sacred writings.*

Quest. IV. What contrariety is there between the carnal mind and God's true and real character?

Ans. Without entering largely into this question, on which a volume might be written, it will be sufficient, for the present purpose, only to say, that the contrariety between the carnal mind and God's true and real character, is the same as is the contrariety between sin and holiness. For the contrariety between God's nature and ours arises merely from this, namely, that God's nature is holy, and our nature is sinful.† And that this is the truth, is evident from this, that originally God's nature and the nature of man were alike; as it is written, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" "So God created man in his own image;" and therefore there was no contrariety between the holy nature of God and the nature of man, originally. When man began to exist, he viewed things as God did, and was affected accordingly.

* A more particular explanation of this subject may be seen, Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel, Sect. XII.

The nature of that spiritual life which is communicated in regeneration, and how it opens the eyes to see the beauty of God's moral character, is explained, with great accuracy, by that great philosopher and eminent divine, President Edwards, in his Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue.

† But, 1. Sin is as contrary to holiness, as holiness is to sin; and therefore our sinful nature is as contrary to God's holy nature, as God's holy nature is to our sinful nature. 2. Our contrariety to God is as universal as is our sinfulness. If we are totally depraved, our contrariety to God is total. 3. Contrariety to the doctrines and duties of revealed religion, in which God's moral character is exhibited, is contrariety to God's moral character. Every objection against the doctrines, and all backwardness to the duties of religion, are so many expressions of contrariety to God's true and real character. 4. If the true God and the true scheme of religion suited the human heart, mankind would as naturally be united in love to the one true God, and to the one true scheme of religion, as they are in love to the world. Had mankind liked the true God, they never would have set up a false god; and had they liked the true scheme of religion, they never would have invented a false one. 5. Love to a false god, and to a false scheme of religion, is the exercise of a spirit of contrariety to the true God, and to the true religion. 6. Love to God's moral character, properly expressed, was the only thing which exposed the prophets, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, to be hated, reviled, and murdered. 7. Christ on the cross shows that the enmity of the carnal mind against God, is mortal enmity. 8. The Jews expressed and justified their enmity against Christ, both at once, by calling him by reproachful names. "Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Meantime saying, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." So, while they hated and crucified him, who was foretold by all the prophets, they thought themselves doing God good service. 9. They knew they hated Jesus, and had they known him to be true God, their contrariety to the true God would have been ascertained to their consciences. 10. Let God's true and real character be agreed upon, and we shall no longer differ about the character of man. 11. God's true and real character would be agreed upon, if we did not hate to admit the truth. 12. The contrariety of our sinful nature to God's holy nature, is the source of all the heresies in the world. Men love to have a God and a religion to suit their own hearts.

And as God loved his own character exhibited in that law which he gave to Adam, so Adam loved it too. There was then no principle of enmity against God in his heart; no disposition to dislike the strictness of the law, or the severity of the penalty, upon the most mature deliberation; yea, he was perfectly pleased with both. For as God perfectly loved his own law, so Adam, being like God, created in his image, perfectly loved it too; so that there was originally no contrariety to God in Adam's nature; and therefore there is no contrariety now, in man's nature to God, but only and merely so far as man's nature is become sinful. For as before sin took place in the human heart, there was no contrariety to God in human nature, so now there is no one thing in human nature, that is contrary to God, but sin; nor is there any root of bitterness, but wickedness. But nothing which is now, or which originally was essential to moral agency, is of the nature of sin; for Adam was a moral agent when he had no sin; when he was in the image of God; besides, if something essential to moral agency were sinful, it would be a sin to be a moral agent. There is, therefore, in the essential properties of a moral agent, no contrariety to the divine nature; for there is nothing in the universe that is contrary to the holy nature of God, but sin; and whatsoever is contrary to the holy nature of God, is sin. To say that there is something in us which is opposite to the holy nature of God, which is not sin, but a duty, is to say, that opposition to God himself is not sin, but a duty. And if opposition to the holy nature of God is not sinful, there is no sin; for if it is no sin to be opposite to the holiness of God, there can be no sin. For if opposition to the holy nature of God is lawful, by fair construction, God is legally dethroned, his law is vacated, we are become gods, too big to be under any government; for if it be lawful for us to oppose God, much more to oppose all other beings. So that to say that opposition to the holy nature of God is not sinful, is itself perfect wickedness. Yet, according to Mr. M., that self-love which in us is opposite to the holiness of the divine nature, and absolutely inconsistent with the love of God, is not sinful, but a duty. This is the most shocking sentiment in his book. It is, in effect, to say, that it is our duty to be at enmity against God.

Besides, Adam rebelled against his Creator, while God was his friend; prompted not by despair, but in a belief of Satan's lies, "Ye shall be as gods, ye shall not surely die," he took and ate, contrary to the express prohibition of his Maker. And we, his posterity, for near six thousand years, have gone on in rebellion, while God has offered to be our friend again; and

his inspired prophets have been abused, and his Son has been crucified in this our world, while sent to invite us to a reconciliation, and to offer us a pardon. Thus stands the fact as recorded in the sacred writings. And thus our contrariety to God began when sin began; nor is there any thing in our nature contrary to the holy nature of God, but sin. And we began to be sinners while God was our friend; and we have continued in our rebellion through a long succession of ages, while God has been offering pardon all the time. Therefore,—

1. The carnal mind is as really contrary to the holy nature of God, as the holy nature of God is to the carnal mind; for sin is as contrary to holiness as holiness is to sin. And yet God is willing to forgive us through Christ; but we are not willing to be reconciled to him.

2. The enmity of the carnal mind against God is entirely of a criminal nature, and comprises in it the sum of all wickedness; for as a conformity to God's holy nature is the sum of all holiness, so a contrariety to God's holy nature is the sum of all wickedness. To say that a contrariety to the holy nature of God is not sinful, is, in effect, to say that there is no sin on earth, or in hell. And indeed Mr. M. gives a broad hint, that in hell there is no sin in all their enmity against the Deity. And if his scheme is true, he must be right in this. But to use arguments to justify ourselves in our enmity against God, which will equally justify the devil, is to carry the point as far as the devil himself can desire it should be carried. Nor can any thing better please the devil, than to find himself justified in his enmity against God and his Son, by the professed friends of both.

3. If the enmity of the carnal mind against God is entirely criminal, and the sum of all wickedness, then, while we justify ourselves in it, we are disqualified for sealing ordinances by it, if any sin, as such, can disqualify us. For to say that a small sin, persisted in, disqualifies for sealing ordinances, and yet the greatest sin does not; to say, for instance, that stealing one shilling from our neighbor, considered merely as an injury done to him, without repentance, disqualifies for sealing ordinances, and that yet a state and course of enmity against God, persisted in, does not, is to strain at a gnat, and to swallow a camel.

4. But if it be really true, as Mr. M. says, that "to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, is the same thing as to love our own misery;" and if "this is the true reason, and the only reason," we do not love God; then our enmity against God is not in the least degree criminal. And so it doth not in the least degree disqualify us for sealing ordinances, especially if we are heartily disposed to love that character of

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SECTION V

2 Cor. v. 20. We pray you in Christ's stead,

WHETHER THE GOSPEL CALLS FALLEN TO GOD.

Question. Doth the gospel call fa
ciled to that character of God, which
at enmity against; or only to be reco
acter of God, which fallen man, as such,
but is naturally disposed to love as soon

Our author undertakes to prove, that
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moral law;" but that, instead of its be
thing to do so; as it is "inconsistent wi
and the character of man; contrary to
nature and grace." Because "to love th
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prove that fallen man, as such, from the n
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love; so that we shall love it, as soon as
principle of grace; and therefore the c
necessity of a "new principle of grace,"
ration is wrought by light."

The question relative to this scheme
would now propose to examination, is t
gospel call fallen man to be reconciled t
which fallen man, as such, is at enmity
reconciled to another character of God
such, is not at enmity against, but is na
as soon as known?" We will, in the
arguments to prove, that the gospel d
be reconciled to that character of God,

enmity against, and then consider what Mr. M. has said to the contrary.

Argument 1. The gospel called Adam, immediately after his fall, to be reconciled to that very character of God against which he was at enmity, or it called him to no reconciliation at all; for to say that the gospel called him to be reconciled to a character against which he was not at enmity, implies a contradiction; for it supposes a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time. For a call to a reconciliation supposes enmity; therefore the gospel did not call Adam after his fall to be reconciled to God at all, or else it called him to be reconciled to that character of God against which he was at enmity. But to say that the gospel did not call Adam to be reconciled to God at all, supposes that God was willing to be reconciled to Adam, but did not desire Adam to be reconciled to him. For if the gospel which was preached to Adam by God himself, did imply no call to Adam to be reconciled to God, then it is plain God did not desire Adam to be reconciled to him; for he did not call him to it; he did not invite him to it; that is, he did not desire that Adam should be reconciled to that character of himself which he had exhibited in his law. But if he did not desire him to be reconciled to that character of himself which he had exhibited in his law, he was willing he should continue to hate it. But if God was willing that Adam should continue to hate that character of himself which he had exhibited in his law, then he did really hate it himself; for if God loved it, he would desire Adam to love it; for he would desire Adam to be like him, and after his image. But to say that God hated that character of himself which be had exhibited in his law, supposes an essential change in God's moral character; for God loved that character before Adam fell, as will be granted.

Remark 1. In this Mr. M.'s scheme is consistent with itself, namely, in supposing no change of nature necessary to be in us in order to our reconciliation to God; because the change of nature necessary to a reconciliation between God and us, has already taken place on God's side. His nature is changed, and so there is no need that ours should be changed. We only need to know the change which has taken place in God's nature, in God's moral character, and all will be well; the breach will be made up, friendship will commence without any new principle of grace in us.

Rem. 2. In this also the Scripture scheme is consistent with itself, namely, in supposing a change of nature necessary to take place on our part, in order to our liking the divine character; because, according to Scripture, no change of nature

has, or ever will take place on God's side. For it is a Scripture maxim, that contrary natures are an abomination to each other. (Prov. xxix. 27.) "An unjust man is abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked;" therefore contrary natures cannot like and take pleasure in each other. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial"? But our sinful nature is contrary to God's holy nature. "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and therefore regeneration is necessary. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and a new nature is communicated in regeneration. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" the old nature is taken away, and a new nature is given. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh;" and this new nature lays a foundation for delight in God and in his ways. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

Rem. 3. There are two kinds of delight in God, which may take place in the human heart, namely, 1. Delight in a mistaken idea of God; 2. Delight in God's true and real character. True delight is delight in God's true and real character; and false delight is delight in a false and mistaken idea of God. Deists and Socinians believe, that God designs to make all his creatures finally happy: this is their idea of God; and they delight in this idea. The impenitent, law-hating Antinomian believes, that God designs to make him finally happy: this is his idea of God; and he delights in this idea. The Christian believes, that God has a supreme regard to the Deity, and designs to assert the dignity of the divine nature, and the infinite evil of sin, in the just punishment of every transgression, without exception, in the criminal, or in his surety; and so to maintain the honor of his law, which is the image of his heart, a transcript of his moral perfections; and to pardon none but penitent believers; and to grant pardon only as an act of mere pure grace, and only through the atonement of Christ, who hath borne the curse of the law, died, the just for the unjust. This is his idea of God; and he delights in this idea. It gives him pleasure to see God exalted, the law honored, sin punished, the sinner humbled, grace glorified. This is a glorious way of saving sinners. Christ crucified, in this view,

is in his eyes the wisdom of God. It appears to be wisdom, truly divine, to be at such infinite expense to do honor to that character of God which is exhibited in the law; for that character appears to be truly divine, and so to be worthy of this infinite honor. It is wise to pay infinite honor to that which is infinitely glorious; but it is foolish to render honor to that which is odious and dishonorable. To a regenerate heart Christ crucified is therefore the wisdom of God, but to others foolishness and a stumbing-block. (1 Cor. i. 18, 23, 24; ii. 14.) These sentiments are explained and proved at large, in my Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel; and this is what Mr. M. misrepresents and cries out against, as new divinity.

Rem. 4. Every unregenerate sinner, be his doctrinal knowledge what it will, is in the temper of his heart an infidel. For it is incredible, that infinite honor should be done to that which appears worthy of no honor at all; but the divine law, and the divine character therein exhibited, to a carnal heart, appear worthy of no honor at all; for they appear not amiable, but odious; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Therefore a cordial belief of the truth of the gospel is peculiar to the regenerate. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

Rem. 5. It is not strange, that an unregenerate man, when the true gospel of Christ is explained and set in a clear light before his eyes, should cry out, "This is new divinity to me;" for it may truly be quite new to him; a system of sentiments he never believed to be true. But it is strange that the true gospel of Christ should appear to be new divinity to an old saint. But it is time to proceed.

Arg. 2. God the Father loves that character of himself which he exhibited to Adam in his law. But the gospel calls us to be like God; to be conformed to his image; therefore the gospel calls us to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law. That God the Father loves that character of himself which he exhibited to Adam in his law, is evident from this, namely; that character which is exhibited in the law was God's true character, as Mr. M. grants. "The divine character exhibited in the moral law, was that which was exhibited to Adam in his state of innocency, and it was God's true character." Indeed, it was God's true and real character, or else God gave himself a character contrary to truth in the moral law; which none will dare to say. But if that character of God was God's true and real character, then it will follow, that God loved that character then; for all will grant that God loved his own character. But if God loved that character then, he does love it still, unless his nature is changed. But that God is

immutable, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, needs no proof to those who believe the Bible. But if God still loves that character of himself, which he exhibited in his law, since the fall, as much as he did before, then, in order to our being like God and in his image, we must love it too. For if he loves it, and we hate it, then we are not like him, but are contrary to him; are not of the same spirit, but of a spirit and disposition contrary to him. But the gospel calls us to be like God; and in a true and real conversion we are changed into the same image; as all grant. And therefore the gospel calls us to be reconciled to that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, which he always did and always will love, and without the love of which we are not like God, but contrary unto him; are not in his image, but are in the image of the wicked one, who doth now, and always will, hate that character of God which is exhibited in his law.

Arg. 3. God the Son, in character of Mediator, loves that character of God which is exhibited in the law, and against which the carnal mind is at enmity. But the gospel calls us to be like Christ in the temper of our hearts: therefore the gospel calls us to be reconciled to, and to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, against which all unregenerate sinners are at enmity. That God the Son in character of Mediator, loves that character of God which is exhibited in the law, is evident, because he is the express image of his Father's person. (Heb. i. 3.) But his Father loves that character, as has been proved; and therefore he loves it as much as his Father does. And besides, he became incarnate, lived and died to do honor to the divine law, and to the divine character therein exhibited. But the gospel calls us to be like Christ, to be of the same spirit, to imitate him, and follow his example. But if we hate that character of God which is exhibited in the law, we are not like Christ, we are not of the same spirit, we do not imitate him nor follow his example; but we are of a temper contrary to him, and like the devil.

Remark 1. To hate that character of God which is exhibited in the law, is to hate Christ Jesus and his righteousness; for Christ Jesus loved that character, and lived and died to do it honor: and in this his righteousness consisted; and for this his Father was well pleased in him. Therefore,—

Rem. 2. Those who are at enmity against God the Father are also at enmity against God the Son; for to hate the law is to hate the gospel, because the gospel vindicates the honor of the law. Thus the Pharisees, who hated the true character of God the Father, which was exhibited in the law of Moses, likewise hated the character of Jesus Christ, exhibited in explaining

and vindicating that law in his public ministry, and in detecting and condemning the false glosses which they had put upon it. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." For if God's character, exhibited in his law, is odious, then the character of Christ, as Mediator, is odious also; because Christ's mediatorial character consists in supreme love to that character of God which is exhibited in the law, exercised and expressed in his life, and in his death.

Rem. 3. To expect acceptance with God on the account of the righteousness of Christ, which consists in love to that character of God which is exhibited in the law, while we allow ourselves to hate that character, and really believe that the gospel does not call us to love it, implies this gross inconsistency, namely, that we acknowledge that love to that character is above all things acceptable to God, and that yet God does not desire us to love it. It was his will that Christ should love and honor it to procure the salvation of his disciples, but his disciples may lawfully hate it. Moreover, to depend on Christ's righteousness, that is, on Christ's loving that character and doing it honor, while we allow ourselves to hate it, and affirm, that "it is contrary to the character of God and to the character of man; contrary to the law and to the gospel; contrary to nature and to grace," for us to love it; is grossly inconsistent; for it is to depend on that as our justifying righteousness in the sight of God, which, if it were in us, would be a sin; for sin is a transgression of the law. But Mr. M. says, that it is "contrary to the law of God for us to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law." Thus men are taught to trust in the righteousness of Christ for justification in the sight of God, while they allow themselves to hate that righteousness of Christ, and to believe it would be a sinful thing in them to love what he loved, and to be holy as he was holy, and righteous as he was righteous. But, if we think it lawful to hate that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, then we think ourselves innocent in hating of it; and so our real dependence for acceptance with God in this case, is not on Christ's righteousness, but on our own innocence.

By the law given to Adam it appears, 1. That God was disposed to punish sin; 2. That in his view, it became him, as a moral Governor of the world, to punish sin; 3. That it was his fixed determination that sin should not go unpunished. And by the cross of Christ, it appears in a still clearer light, 1. That God is disposed to punish sin; 2. That in his view, it becomes him, as moral Governor of the world, to punish sin; 3. That it is his fixed determination that sin shall not go unpunished. But a determination, in all instances, to punish sin in the crimi-

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his sense of it, may "be wrought by light," without any sanctifying influences of the Spirit at all. For as God's supposed new character may appear glorious and amiable to one who is at enmity against God's old character, so this new character may for the same reason be loved by one who is at enmity against his old character; that is, by the carnal mind. For this *new* God teaches his votaries, that it is "contrary to the character of God, and contrary to the character of men; contrary to the law and to the gospel; contrary to nature and to grace," to love that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, holy, just, and good, as it is, against which the carnal mind is at enmity. And this doctrine is so perfectly agreeable to a carnal heart, that if we may have the favor and love of the Almighty on this plan, Mr. M. might well say, "that there is nothing in our fallen circumstances to prevent our returning to the love of God," and that without any new principle of grace.

Arg. 5. All the holy inhabitants of heaven love that character of God, which is exhibited in his holy law, as it is set forth, in the clearest and strongest point of light, in the eternal misery of the damned; for they all join to cry, Hallelujah, while their smoke ascendeth forever and ever. (Rev. xix. 1—6.) But if we are not by the gospel brought to a reconciliation to the same character, we cannot join in the worship of heaven, nor with any comfort live among them. (2 Cor. vi. 14—15.)

Arg. 6. But if Mr. M.'s scheme is true, the breach between God and the sinner may be made up, and a perfect reconciliation take place, without the sinner's ever repenting of that enmity against God which is in his heart as a fallen creature; yea, it is lawful for the sinner to continue in that enmity; yea, it is his duty; for Mr. M. says, it is "contrary to the law of God to love that character of the Deity which is exhibited in the moral law." And therefore, when Christ came to call sinners to repentance, he had no intention that they should repent of their enmity against his Father's character exhibited in that holy law, which he loved and obeyed in his life, and honored in his death; but was free and heartily willing they should go on in their enmity to it to all eternity; for Mr. M. says, "The love of God which the gospel teacheth," is not love to the divine character exhibited in the law, but "love of that divine character which is exhibited to us in a Mediator, and *no other*." But if God the Father loves that character of himself which is exhibited in his holy law, and if God the Son loves that character, and if all the holy inhabitants of heaven are like God and his Son, and love that character too, then converts, on Mr. M.'s scheme, when they arrive at heaven, if they

ever should arrive there, could not join with the church above, or make that profession of love to God, which all the rest of the inhabitants do there; but would need an external graceless covenant in that world, in order to join in full communion there, as much as they do in this world here below, in order to join in full communion here.

But it is time now to attend to Mr. M.'s reasoning; and this is the sum, and this is the whole force of his argument, on the strength of which his whole scheme stands, and which he has repeated over and over again.

Objection. "To love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, is the same thing as to love our own misery. But to love our own misery is to take pleasure in pain; which is a contradiction, and in its own nature impossible; contrary to the character of God, and to the character of men; contrary to the law and to the gospel; contrary to nature and to grace."

Answer 1. Our author says, "that the primary reason why God is to be loved, is the transcendent excellency of the divine perfections."* But "the transcendent excellency of the divine perfections" is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and therefore that character of God which is exhibited in the law, is as "transcendently excellent" since, as it was before the fall, and therefore this reason of love remains in *full force* to us in our guilty state.

Ans. 2. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and all the holy inhabitants of heaven, love that character of God which is exhibited in his law; and yet they do not love misery itself, or take any pleasure in the pains of the damned, considered merely as pain. If God did take pleasure in the pains of the damned, considered merely as pain; if this were the character which he exhibits of himself in his law; then to love this character would be the same thing as to love misery. So that this is implicitly, and by fair construction, imputed to the Father of the universe, when it is said, that "to

* "If all the ground and reason there is for fallen man to exercise dependence on God," that is, for eternal life, "ariseth from the covenant of grace," as Mr. M. says, "yet all the ground and reason that mankind have to love God does not arise from the covenant of grace." For God was in himself infinitely worthy of our love, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, otherwise the gift of Christ to answer the demands of the law, in our room, had been needless; for there was no need our surety should ever pay a debt for us which we ourselves never owed. And it was as repugnant to the law, and as much "presumption," to expect eternal life before the fall, as since, without perfect obedience, on the foot of law. This kind of dependence was never required by the law of Adam, or of any other man. It was no more his duty before the fall than it was afterwards.

love that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, is the same thing as to love our own misery." But to say that God and the holy inhabitants of heaven take pleasure in the pains of the damned, considered merely as pain, is to impute to them a spirit of disinterested malice. But to justify our enmity against God by such an imputation, is exceeding impious. But, on the other hand, if God may love that character of himself which is exhibited in his law, and yet not love misery itself; then, were we regenerate, were we made partakers of the divine nature, we might be like God; and be affected as the holy inhabitants of heaven are; and so might love that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, and not love misery in ourselves, or in any other beings.

A wise and good father, when he inflicts just punishment on a haughty, stubborn child, for some heinous crime, approves and loves his own conduct, and the character which he exhibits therein; but yet he does not love his child's misery itself, or take pleasure in his pain, as such, or desire his child to take pleasure in it. And if the proud, haughty, stubborn, impenitent child should say, "To love a whipping father is the same thing as to love to be whipped; but to love to be whipped is to love misery; but to love misery is a contradiction, and in its own nature impossible, and contrary to the law of God, which requires me to love myself;" every obedient child in the family would be able to see the fallacy of the argument. And love to their father's honor would make them love him for vindicating his honor in the just punishment of such a son. Nor is there a father on earth, hearing such language as this from a child, but that would think it proper and fit that his uncircumcised heart should be so humbled as to accept the punishment of his iniquity before he pardoned him; nor would he forgive him, until he should feel and say, "I deserve to be whipped. It is good enough for me. It becomes my father to do it. Nor is it a blemish, but a beauty, in his character, to be disposed to chastise such a haughty wretch as I am;" for the father approves of his own disposition to punish his child; he knows that it becomes him; and until his child knows it too, he cannot but disapprove of him, as a stubborn, impenitent child. And yet no father ever desired his child to love misery. Nay, on the contrary, did the child love to be whipped, did whipping give the child pleasure, it would cease to be of the nature of a punishment; it would gratify the child, and frustrate the father. To say, in this case, that "to love a whipping father is the same thing as to love to be whipped," is to say, that the father whips the child merely for the pleasure of whipping it, and takes

delight in its misery, for itself; and so is guilty of disinterested malice, which no man ever was guilty of, and which to charge on the Deity is the highest blasphemy. For if the father loves his own character, and delights in his own conduct toward his child, without loving the child's misery itself, then nothing hinders, but that the child might love his father's character and conduct too, without loving its own misery. For a more particular answer to this objection, see Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel.

SECTION VIII.

GEN. i. 27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.

ADAM'S LOVE TO GOD BEFORE THE FALL.

Question. How was it possible for Adam, before the fall, to love that character of God which was exhibited to him in the law, consistently with the love of his own happiness?

The difficulty which attends this question may come into view if we consider, —

1. That a state of eternal misery is infinitely worse than not to be. Existence itself is desirable to mere nature, only as it implies a capacity for the enjoyment of happiness. Nature dreads annihilation, as thereby all happiness is lost forever. But it is better to be without happiness, than it is to be not only without happiness, but miserable. Pure misery is worse than non-existence; hence abandoned, guilty sinners often wish for annihilation; and had Adam for the first transgression been threatened with annihilation, it might have been thought of with less horror and dread. But misery is a dreadful thing; and eternal misery is infinitely dreadful, infinitely worse than not to be. How therefore could Adam think of that dreadful word *death*, as implying eternal misery, and yet love that Being who had threatened this for the first transgression? yea, and love that very character exhibited in the threatening itself? How could love to this character consist with his love to his own happiness? It is true, God had been kind to him, in giving him a happy existence, surrounded with many delights; but this happiness and these delights, to be enjoyed for thousands

of ages, were lighter than a feather, compared with eternal misery. And it is true, he might remain happy forever, in case of perfect obedience; and this was a glorious prospect. But what if he sinned? what then? *Death! eternal death!* never-ending woes were threatened, as his just desert. But why eternal death for one offence? Where was the wisdom, justice, or goodness of this? This is the language of self-love, as it now takes place in fallen man. And if, as Mr. M. says, "this principle of self-love was essential to moral agency" in innocent Adam, it must have been the language of his heart before the fall.

2. But one bad property entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will render any moral character devoid of beauty. If there is no moral beauty in the divine character, he is neither worthy of supreme love, nor capable of being the supreme good. A law, a fixed law, is an expression of the fixed character of the lawgiver. If God's disposition to punish sin with eternal misery appeared in Adam's eyes to be a bad property in the Deity, it was not possible he should love him with all his heart. It was as impossible before his fall as after, even as it is as impossible to love a tyrant before we fall into his hands, as afterwards. And if Adam could not love the divine character before his fall, then he could take no delight in him; for an odious character, instead of giving pleasure, gives pain. And if Adam neither loved the divine character, nor delighted in it before the fall, he was in the same state and temper of mind before as he was after the fall; and if so, then he was not created in the image of God, but came into existence as much depraved as we are.

3. To say that this dark side of the divine character was out of his view before he fell, and that he viewed the Deity only in the character of an almighty benefactor, and his friend; and therefore, in this view of things, "the love of God and self-love were consistent;" is really to say, that Adam before the fall did not love God's true and real character, as exhibited in the law which he was under; but rather that character was so entirely out of his view, that he had no exercises of heart about it, good or bad; for it, or against it; which amounts to the same thing as to say, that he was never actually friendly to God's true character, even before the fall, but rather had he fully known it, and taken a deliberate view of it with application to himself, he would have disliked it even then. And this must with as much reason then, as afterwards, have been the language of his heart: "To love this character of God is to love my own misery; but to love my own misery is impossible; for to take pleasure in pain implies a contradiction."

4. Mr. M. says, "For a principle of self-love is essential to

our nature. Take away all self-love, and a total indifference to pleasure and pain will take place in us; and then we become incapable of being influenced by promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments; which strips us of our moral agency. But to love God in our guilty state according to the character of him in the moral law, does thus totally exclude all self-love from its proper place and exercise in the heart. For to be well pleased in God as a holy and righteous being, from the perfections of whose nature it becomes absolutely necessary that he should make us forever completely miserable,* is directly repugnant to, and absolutely inconsistent with, the least degree of regard to our own well-being. There can "be in nature no such sort of regeneration as to bring the heart, under such circumstances, to exercise true love to God." Therefore, if these things are true, —

5. It was in the nature of things impossible that Adam, before the fall, should deliberately and understandingly love that character of God which was exhibited to him in the law he was

* *Question* 1. Was it absolutely necessary, from the perfections of the divine nature, that fallen Adam should be miserable forever? that is, that his sin should be punished in his own person? Or, *Q.* 2. Did God, by the law given to Adam, lay himself under an absolute necessity to make Adam miserable forever? that is, to punish his sin in his own person? If so, then the doctrine of substitution, of one dying in the room of another, is absolutely inconsistent with the perfections of the divine nature, and with the tenor of the divine law; to say which saps the very foundation of divine revelation, and demonstrates that the God, who appeared to Adam after the fall was not the same God that had appeared to him before. The God of the law and the God of the gospel, are two beings, absolutely inconsistent with each other. The truth is, 1. That God's disposition to punish sin according to its desert is, and ever was, and ever will be, essential to his nature. But to punish sin, in all instances, in the criminal himself, without ever admitting a surety, is not essential to his nature. But, 2. God's disposition to punish sin according to its desert, is set in as clear and strong a point of light in the gospel, as in the law; in the death of Christ, as if every sinner had been punished in his own person. 3. This disposition is a beauty in the divine character, or a blemish. If it is a beauty, then it is, and always was, and always will be, an object of love. If a blemish, then it is not an object of love, as exhibited in the law, or in the gospel; in the death of the criminal, or of his surety. But if it is a blemish, it is more odious, as exhibited in the gospel, than in the law. 4. As a regard to a parent's honor renders the parent's disposition to maintain his honor, in the government of his house, a beauty in the eyes of a child, so a regard to the honor of the Deity renders his disposition to maintain his honor in the government of his kingdom, a beauty in the eyes of every regenerate soul. But the holiness and justice of the divine nature are disagreeable in the eyes of every one who is under the government of supreme self-love; for mere self-love has no regard for God. However, 5. A carnal heart, which is enmity against God's true and real character, from a mere selfish spirit, may be greatly pleased with the idea of an almighty reconciled Father and Friend, determined to make him happy forever, and may cry out, "This God is transcendently excellent and glorious;" but God does not sustain this character with respect to any impenitent sinner. It is true, many impenitent sinners have such a "discovery," but the thing discovered is a lie, and the father of lies is the author of the discovery. And yet they mistake this lie for glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

under; for it implied "love to his own misery," to love it one time as really as another, before his fall as well as afterwards. Thus, when a wise and good father threatens to whip his child in case he commits some particular crime, which he warns him against; to love the character of that father exhibited in that threatening, is as really contrary to self-love before the crime is committed as it is afterwards. For it is precisely the same thing to love a character exhibited in a threatening, as it is to love the same character exhibited in the execution of that threatening; for the character exhibited is precisely the same; but to love the same character is the same thing. And if it implies a "total indifference to pleasure and pain" to love this character at one time, it does also equally at all times; for love to it is always, at all times, and under all circumstances, precisely one and the same thing. So that, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, Adam came into existence with a spirit of enmity to God in his heart. Nor was it possible, in the nature of things, that he should ever have had it in his heart to love that character of God which was exhibited in the law which he was under. Nor is it possible, that we, his posterity, should ever be brought to love it. "There can be in nature no such sort of regeneration." Therefore Adam was not created in the image of God, nor are any of his posterity recovered to the image of God by the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. And thus divine revelation is sapped at the very foundation. For one of the first facts revealed is in its own nature absolutely impossible, namely, that Adam was created in the image of God; because, for Adam to love that character of God which was exhibited in that law which Adam was under, was "inconsistent with the least degree of regard to his own well-being." Besides, —

6. If it is inconsistent with that regard to our own well-being, which we ought to exercise, in our guilty state, to love that character of God, it is equally inconsistent with that regard to our neighbor's well-being, which we ought to exercise; for it is an agreed point, that we ought to love our neighbor as ourselves. And it is as "contrary to the law of God" to delight in our neighbor's misery, as in our own. So that, —

7. Unless a universal salvation of devils and the damned takes place, it will eternally be "absolutely inconsistent" with that regard which we ought to have to ourselves and to our neighbors, to love the Deity; and, therefore, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, all holy beings in the intellectual system must join in a general revolt, unless the Deity entirely lays aside his moral character, exhibited in the moral law; and grants a general release to all the damned. And thus, —

8. The doctrine of the eternity of hell torments must be given up, or God's moral character is wholly ruined; for it is as bad a piece of conduct in the Deity to damn my neighbor, as it is to damn myself; for my neighbor's welfare is worth as much as my own; and it is as contrary to the law to love my neighbor's misery, as to love my own misery. It never was, therefore, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, any part of God's moral character to be disposed to punish sin with everlasting punishment, as Jesus taught. (Matt. xxv. 46.) And so Jesus was not the Christ; or else the Socinians are right, and we must join with them, and say, that God never did think, 1. That he was God, that is, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of the supreme love and universal obedience of his rational creatures. Or, 2. That sin was an infinite evil. Or, 3. That sin did deserve an infinite punishment. 4. Nor did he ever intend to punish it with everlasting punishment. And, 5. If sin is not an infinite evil, an infinite atonement never was needed, or made. And so, 6. Our Savior is not God. And thus a denial of the divinity of God the Father issues in the denial of the divinity of God the Son; and having framed in our fancy a God to suit our hearts, the Holy Ghost, as a sanctifier, becomes needless; for we can love this God, without any new principle of grace. And thus, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, and if we will pursue it, in its necessary consequences, we are Socinians or infidels; and the odds between Socinianism and infidelity is not great.

Thus the difficulty is stated. And the answer to it is as follows:—

This must be admitted, as a self-evident maxim, that that regard to the welfare of ourselves and of our neighbors, which is inconsistent with the love of God's moral character, is of the nature of opposition to God. But opposition to the moral character of God is not a duty, but a sin. That self-love, therefore, "which is absolutely inconsistent with the love of God," is criminal; and therefore it was so far from being "essential to moral agency" in innocent Adam, that it did not belong to, but was inconsistent with, his character. He loved happiness, but he placed his chief happiness in God's glory, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom be glory forever." Nor had he any separate interest of his own, independent of God, and in opposition to his honor and glory, nor the least degree of a selfish spirit. For himself, his soul and body, his all, was offered up as a living sacrifice to God, without reserve. And it was no more inconsistent with Adam's love of happiness to love God for saying, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,"

than it was inconsistent with God's goodness for God to love his own character exhibited in this threatening. It is in its own nature, and by the consent of all mankind, perfectly consistent, to give up and sacrifice a lesser good to a greater, if the greater can be secured in no other way; while yet at the same time, the lesser good, which is given up, is valued according to its worth. If God acted a consistent part in exercising a greater regard to his own honor than to Adam's welfare, in giving out that threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," then it was equally consistent in Adam to be affected as his Maker was. If the Deity was consistent with himself, then Adam, who was created in his image, was consistent also. If the holiness and justice of the divine nature, exhibited in that threatening, were perfect in beauty, without a blemish in the eyes of infinite Goodness, they must likewise appear so in Adam's eyes, while he had no other kind of regard for his own welfare than had his Creator; that is, so long as he continued to be in the image of God. And if love to God and to his own happiness were originally consistent in Adam, when in the image of God, they may be equally consistent in any of Adam's sons, who are anew restored to that image of God which Adam lost. And the holiness and justice of the divine nature, as exhibited in the divine law, may appear to be perfect in beauty, with application to ourselves, and God appear to be infinitely lovely in his disposition to punish sin according to its deserts, and yet our own eternal welfare be at the same time prized according to its worth, and the salvation of the gospel appear infinitely precious, and the fruit of grace infinitely great and absolutely free; and the gospel way of salvation worthy of God. But were not the divine character exhibited in the divine law perfect in beauty, without a blemish, it ought to have been laid aside in disgrace, and not honored with the highest honors on the cross. If "to love God is the same thing as to love misery," if to love God is "contrary to the law of God," then that law which requires this is an absurd, inconsistent, tyrannical law not worthy of God, nor worthy to be honored by the blood of his own Son. For a more large and particular view of this subject the reader is referred to my Essay on the Gospel, Sect. II.

Mr. M.'s reasoning implies that in Adam, before the fall, there was really "no principle of holiness," no disinterested regard to the Deity; and that his whole soul was under the government of self-love, even the same "principle of self-love" which governed him after the fall. And therefore, as soon as God's favor was lost, and he exposed to destruction, this favorite principle of self-love became "inconsistent with the love of

God," and continues to be so, until God appears to be our friend again. And so Adam had no "principle of holiness" to lose, nor is there any such thing for us to expect.

Mr. M. says, "But when we inquire of them what they mean by this new principle which is implanted in the soul by regeneration, they can give no account about it." Yes, we can give as distinct an account about it as we can of a "principle of self-love." It is that image of God in which Adam was created, restored anew. It is true, that in Adam this holy principle was not a confirmed habit, but liable to be lost by the first sin; but in believers who are united to the second Adam, the "principle of grace" is a confirmed habit, and shall never be lost. It becomes confirmed in consequence of the first act of saving faith.* (Eph. i. 13, 14;) but its nature is the same. For

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* As Adam was created in the image of God to prepare him for holy acts and exercises of heart, so the same image of God is restored in regeneration, to prepare us for the first holy act. As there was a holy principle in Adam before the first holy act, so there is a holy principle in the regenerate sinner before the first holy act. And, as Adam's holy principle was not a confirmed habit in its first existence, but was to have been confirmed on his acting up to the covenant he was under, so the holy principle given in regeneration is not a confirmed habit in its first existence, but immediately becomes confirmed as soon as the regenerate sinner complies with the covenant of grace in the first act of saving faith. And thus, as Adam would have been entitled to eternal life on his compliance with the covenant of works, so the regenerate sinner is entitled to eternal life on his compliance with the covenant of grace; for a confirmed habit of grace is eternal life, that is, life never to end, life everlasting. "He that believeth hath everlasting life." Hence the promises of the gospel are not made to the holy principle, passively considered, but to its acts and exercises; even as the blessings of the first covenant were not promised to that image of God, in which Adam began to exist, but to his active compliance with that covenant. And thus, that faith, by which we are married to Christ, is not an unregenerate, sinful act; but, as our Catechism expresses it, "a saving grace." But if faith is before regeneration, the act of a sinner, dead in sin, "totally depraved," it is not "a saving *grace*," but a saving *sin*. Or else it is not an act, but a mere passive thing, and implies no consent of will.

"*Question.* But here it may be doubted, and objected against this position, If we cannot believe till we are quickened with spiritual life, as you say, and cannot be justified till we believe, as all say, then it will follow, that a regenerate soul may be in a state of condemnation for a time, and consequently perish, if death should befall him in that juncture." Thus Mr. Flavel states the objection, and thus he answers it:

"*Solution.* To this I return: that when we speak of the priority of this quickening work of the Spirit to our actual believing, we rather understand it of the priority of nature, than of time, the nature and order of the work requiring it to be so; a vital principle must, in order of nature, be infused, before a vital act can be exerted. First make the tree good, and then the fruit good. And admit we should grant some priority in time also to this quickening principle, before actual faith; yet the absurdity mentioned would be no way conequent upon this concession; for as the vital act of faith quickly follows the regenerating principle, so the soul is abundantly secured against the danger objected; God never beginning any special work of grace upon the soul, and then leaving it, and the soul with it, in hazard; but preserves both to the finishing and completing of his gracious design." — *Mr. Flavel's Method of Grace, Sermon 5.*

there is but one kind of true holiness in the universe; for the holiness of Christ is of the same nature with the holiness of God the Father. Christ is the express image of his Father; and of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace. In regeneration, therefore, we are restored anew to that image of God, in which Adam was created; so that this "principle of grace" is that whereby we are inclined to a disinterested supreme regard to the Deity, an infinitely worthy being; and so disposed to love that character of him exhibited in his law, in which his infinite dignity is asserted, in the threatening of an infinite punishment for sin; even as self-love is "that principle" whereby a fallen creature is inclined to a supreme regard to himself, and to his own honor and interest, separate from, independent of, and unsubordinate to, God and his glory; which self-love is in kind different from that love of happiness which is essential to every holy being. The one is contrary to the holiness of the divine nature, and the source of all our enmity against the Deity; the other is in perfect harmony with the divine nature, and consistent with the perfect love of the holiness and justice of God, as exhibited in his law.

Mr. M. says, "But if this be true, that there must be a gracious principle implanted in the heart of a sinner, before he is capable of any gracious acts, then, for the same reason, there must be a corrupt principle implanted in the heart of a holy creature, Adam, for instance, before he is capable of any sinful acts." The Scripture teaches us, that God created man in his own image, whereby he was prepared to holy acts and exercises: but the Scripture does not teach us, that God afterwards created man in the image of the devil, to render him capable of sinful acts. And, therefore, "if we would acquiesce in the plain Scripture account of these things, we should readily allow," that it was needful, in order to prepare Adam for holy acts, that he should be created in the image of God; yet it was not necessary "for the same reason, that there should be a corrupt principle implanted in his heart, before he was capable of any sinful act." For sin begins in that which is merely negative; that is, it begins in not loving God with all the heart; in ceasing to exercise that regard to the Deity which is his due; or in not having such a sense of his worthiness of love and regard, as ought to take place in the heart. But a sense of God's infinite worthiness, of supreme love and perfect obedience, may cease to fill and govern the whole soul, without a previous implantation of a corrupt principle. It did so in Adam; for had he remained under the entire government of supreme love to God, he would not have eaten the forbidden fruit; and as supreme love to God ceased,

supreme self-love took place of course; but it never was in Adam's heart before. He now, for the first time, began to have a frame of heart answerable to Satan's words, "Ye shall be as Gods; ye shall not surely die." And so he took and ate; in consequence of which, this principle of supreme self-love became a confirmed habit, and his whole heart was disposed to justify himself in it. And thus Adam became totally depraved.

Remark 1. Holiness, as it originally took place in human nature, had God for its author: and it was produced by a creating power. "In the image of God *created* he him." So it is restored by the same power. "We are his workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works." But that which is God's gift, (Ezek. xxxvi. 26,) "a new heart will I give you," is also the sinner's duty. (Ezek. xviii. 31.) "Make you a new heart." For total depravity and moral agency are consistent: otherwise those words, (Eph. ii. 1,) "dead in sin," would be an express contradiction. To say that the doctrine of created holiness is absurd, is to say that the Bible is not the word of God; for this is one of the first doctrines taught in that book. "In the image of God created he him."

Rem. 2. As Adam, while in the image of God, viewed the divine character exhibited in the moral law in the same glorious point of light in which God himself did, in which view the image of God in Adam partly consisted, and which view he totally lost by the fall, so this view of the divine character is restored, when the image of God is renewed in regeneration; as it is written, (Col. iii. 10,) "the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him;" that is, that view of divine things, which is like that view which God hath of them, and which is the image of his knowledge, and which was originally in man before the fall, and was lost by the fall, is *renewed*, is caused to exist anew, by the same power by which it at first existed, when God created man in his own image. (Cor. iv. 6.) "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," saying, "Let there be light, and there was light," by the same creating power, "hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Rem. 3. Habitually to view things as God does, and to be affected and act accordingly, (that is, comprising both habit and act,) is the whole of that image of God, to which saints are recovered by the power of the Holy Ghost, imperfectly in this world, and perfectly in the world to come. And this image of God is the same in kind with that which Adam lost; for the essential rectitude of the divine nature is the original standard.

The moral law is a transcript of this original; this law was written on Adam's heart. The mediatorial righteousness of Christ is the law perfectly fulfilled. So Christ is the express image of his Father; and saints are the express image of Christ. And so there is but one kind of true holiness in the universe; and this is that which will lay the foundation for the perfect and eternal union, which will take place among all holy beings, in the kingdom of heaven — God on the throne, and every creature there in his proper place, by universal consent, all of the same spirit.

Rem. 4. The false kinds of holiness, exhibited in all false schemes of religion, differ in kind from the holiness of heaven, which implies love to that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, to which all unholy beings are in a state of total opposition. For graceless men, who are pacified merely in a belief that they are safe, are, in any other view, of the same temper towards the Deity with the damned. For supreme self-love governs every apostate creature, who is totally destitute of true love, of disinterested benevolence to the most high God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth.

SECTION IX.

MATT. xxviii. 19. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

THE CHRISTIAN CREED; THE ARMINIAN CREED; MR. M.'S CREED; REMARKS ON EACH.

THAT which is commonly called the apostles' creed, although not compiled by the apostles, yet is confessedly of very ancient date. And the three principal articles of it are these: 1. I believe in God the Father, almighty Maker of heaven and earth. 2. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son. 3. I believe in the Holy Ghost. Which doubtless had reference to the form of baptism appointed by our blessed Savior. He, therefore, who believes aright, and in a right manner, concerning Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has the true Christian faith, and is himself a true Christian; and so is qualified to be active in offering up himself and his seed to God in Christian baptism. But some of the chief things, which in the inspired writings we are taught to believe concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are these, which may be expressed in the following articles, in contrast with the Arminian creed, and with Mr. M.'s.

The Christian Creed.	The Arminian Creed.	Mr. Mather's Creed.
1. *Concerning God the Father.*	1. *Concerning God the Father.*	1. *Concerning God the Father.*
I believe that the moral character of God, exhibited in the moral law, is perfect in beauty, without a blemish; and that our disaffection to the Deity is absolutely inexcusable and infinitely criminal, and justly deserves the penalty threatened, infinitely dreadful as it is. In which view, the divine law is holy, just, and good; worthy of the highest honor; and the salvation of the gospel, from step to step, from beginning to end, is of mere grace.	I believe that it would have been unjust in God to have held mankind, after the fall, bound by the moral law, without any abatement; and that, therefore, some relief was in justice due to a fallen world. And therefore the relief granted is not wholly of grace; nor ought it be acknowledged as such by us.	I believe that the moral character of God, exhibited in the moral law, is not to us an object of love; and that it is not a duty, but a sin, for us to love it; even contrary to the law of God. Because to love it is the same thing as to love our own misery. However, God has given his Son to fulfil this law, and to vindicate and maintain the honor and dignity of his character exhibited in it; that sinners might be pardoned while at enmity against it. (p. 28, 41, 42, 43.)
2. *Concerning God the Son.*	2. *Concerning God the Son.*	2. *Concerning God the Son.*
I believe that Jesus Christ, in character of Mediator between God and man, loved the moral character of his Father, exhibited in the moral law, and lived and died to do it honor; that through him penitent believers might be saved, consistently with the divine justice, and to the glory of divine grace. And in this view Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God.	I believe that Christ died to purchase an abatement of this unjust law; and to procure salvation for us on terms which we are able to comply with, by his assistance.	I believe that the character of God, exhibited in the gospel, is so accommodated to the state and temper of our hearts, that we shall love it as soon as known, without any new principle of grace; and even while we are at enmity against that character of God exhibited in the law. (p. 22, 41—48.)
3. *Concerning God the Holy Ghost.*	3. *Concerning God the Holy Ghost.*	3. *Concerning God the Holy Ghost.*
I believe that fallen man is so disaffected to the character of the Father and the Son, that no means whatsoever are sufficient to reconcile us to God, without the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost. So that, except we are born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God. But in consequence of the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost, by which the veil is taken off from our hearts, we behold the glory of the Lord, and	I believe that all men have sufficient assistance to comply with the terms of salvation, as it would be unjust to require more than we can do, without granting needful assistance to enable us to do it. And thus the injury done to us by the law is made up by the gospel. And in this view the divine character appears amiable in our eyes. And all mankind might love it, did they but know it, without any new principle of grace. See	I believe that all needful assistance of the Holy Spirit is promised to all baptized persons, to render external means effectual to salvation. But light is all that is needful. For no kind of regeneration will bring the human heart to love that character of God which is exhibited in the law, and the character of God exhibited in the gospel will naturally be loved, as soon as known, by every one, without any new principle of grace;

The Christian Creed.	The Arminian Creed.	Mr. Mather's Creed.
every answerable affection is excited in us; and God and Christ are loved more than wives and children, than houses and lands; yea, than our own lives. Whereby we are disposed and prepared to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ; and publicly join with his people, and espouse his cause.	Dr. Stebbins on the operations of the Spirit; Dr. Whitby on the five points.	but not loved very much; for I believe that not more than one convert in a hundred can say, with a good conscience, that he loves God at all. And so saints as well as sinners stand in need of the external covenant. (First book, p. 39, 60. Second book, p. 45—48, 78, 79, 80, 81.)

Remark 1. According to the Arminian creed, mankind are the injured party; Christ died to get justice done us; and simply to have justice done us is all we need to bring us to be at peace with God. Let the terms of salvation be as low as in justice they ought to be; let us have all that assistance which in justice we ought to have; and we need no more: the rest we will do ourselves. But for God to do us justice, is not an act of grace.

2. According to Mr. Mather's creed, the divine law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, requires us, on pain of eternal death, to do that which is not our duty to do; yea, that which to do, in us, would be a sinful thing; namely, to love God with all our heart. And so Christ fulfilled a law, in our stead, which it was not our duty to fulfil; yea, a law to obey which, in us, had been a sinful thing. But to pay a debt for us, which we ourselves did not owe, was needless: and to honor a law which requires sin, is a sinful thing.

3. The divinity of God the Father is the first article of the Christian creed, and so much the foundation of the whole Christian system, that if this is denied, the whole will sink of course; or, in other words, that God, the Creator and moral Governor of the universe, is an absolutely perfect and infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience from his creature man, is the foundation on which the law stands, and on which the whole gospel scheme is built. To deny this point, is in effect to deny the whole of divine revelation. Atheism is at the bottom of infidelity. The contrariety of the carnal mind to God's true and real character, is at bottom of atheism. The fool saith in his heart, There is no God.

4. It was wise in God, even at the expense of the blood of his own Son, to assert and maintain the honor of a law, which is a transcript of his moral character, and which all his apostate creatures join to hate; because in this he does justice to himself,

and to his government, while he shows mercy to sinners. But enmity against the divine law renders us blind to the wisdom, glory, and grace of the gospel, and is the cause of unbelief. (1 Cor. i. 18; ii. 14, compared with Rom. viii. 7; iii. 25; vii. 12. John viii. 42, 43.)

5. He who understands and believes the Christian creed, and who is affected and acts accordingly, is a Christian qualified for baptism, and entitled to eternal life. (Matt. xiii. 23. Mark xvi. 16. John xvii. 3.)

6. He who believes the first article of the Christian creed, with a living faith, has what Paul means by "repentance toward God." And he who believes the second article of the Christian creed, with a living faith, has what Paul means by "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." A belief of both which is implied in that faith by which a sinner is justified. (Luke v. 31, 32; xviii. 14; xxiv. 47. Acts xx. 21. Rom. iii. 19—26.) And this faith is the first grace, and the sum, seed, and root of all Christian graces, (Matt. xiii. 23;) and is peculiar to the regenerate, (Rom. viii. 7. 1 John v. 1. 1 Cor. i. 18; ii. 14. John i. 13. Luke viii. 11—15;) and is eternal life begun in the soul. (John xvii. 3.)

7. The love of the truth is the life of faith; or, in other words, love to the truth believed is of the essence of a living faith, and that wherein it specifically differs from the faith of devils, or a dead faith. (John xvi. 27. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. Jam. ii. 26.) And therefore,—

8. There is a universal, inseparable connection between a living faith and a holy life, which renders assurance attainable by believers in common, (Matt. xiii. 23. Jam. ii. 17, 18. 1 John ii. 3;) so that those words are strictly true, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

9. But the faith of devils, attended with a lying profession, is not that qualification for baptism which our Savior had in view, in Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

10. The gospel may be, and ought to be, preached to all in common, even to every creature, let their character be ever so vicious, as a means of their conversion; but baptism is not to be administered to adults until they believe and profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him. (Mark xvi. 15, 16. Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 9, 10.) For,—

11. The adult person, in the act of offering himself to God in baptism, practically declares, that he devotes himself to God through Jesus Christ, and so puts on Christ. (Gal. iii. 26, 27.)

But a false and lying profession is condemned by God in the Old Testament, (Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37. Eccl. v. 5,) and by Jesus Christ in the New, (Luke vi. 46. Matt. xxii. 12. Luke xiv. 25—35. 1 John ii. 4. Rev. ii. 2, 9;) and is a means, not of salvation, but of destruction. (Acts v. 1—11.)

12. The adult person, who is unqualified to offer himself in baptism, is equally unqualified to offer his infant child in baptism; for he who is without a heart to devote himself to God, is equally without a heart to devote his child to God.

13. Pride, in ambitious minds, may excite very strong inclinations to make a false profession; but a well-enlightened conscience never will dictate this, as matter of duty.

14. It is the indispensable duty of every one, to whom the gospel comes, to become a real Christian without delay; and then without delay to make a public profession of Christianity; and then to attend the seals. But to seal the covenant of grace with our hands, while we reject it in our hearts, is to act deceitfully with our Maker. And to invent a new covenant which God never exhibited, and a new scheme of religion to support it, which God never revealed, suited to the hearts of those who reject the covenant of grace, and who are under the curse of the covenant of works, is to find a resting-place for the wicked.

SECTION X.

MR. MATHER'S SCHEME OF RELIGION INCONSISTENT WITH ITSELF.

Our author professes in his preface, not "to be fond of his own judgment;" but to stand "ready to give it up," when any one will do "the friendly office of setting light before him." And he desires that if there be any "material mistakes" in his scheme, they may be "pointed out." It is therefore to be hoped, that he will not be displeased, if, in addition to the light already set before him, some of the various inconsistent sentiments of his scheme are contrasted, whereby he may be further assisted to discern, that his scheme must be wrong somewhere; for the truth is ever consistent with itself.

1. In his first book, he says, "A child dedicated to God in baptism is thereby brought into covenant with God, and has a promise left to it of the means of grace, and the strivings of God's Holy Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation." But in his second book, he says, that they must "submit to a

sovereign God." But if they have "a covenant right to the strivings of the Holy Spirit," if they have "a promise," then they do not lie at God's sovereign mercy in the case, but may plead the covenant and promise of God.

2. In his first book, he endeavors to prove that the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii.) was not the covenant of grace, because "it might be broken," which implies, that it had some condition, which if not fulfilled, all the blessings of it would be forfeited. But in his second book, he endeavors to prove, that the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii.) was not the covenant of grace, because it had no conditions, but all the blessings of it were promised to Abraham and his seed "absolutely and unconditionally;" on which hypothesis this covenant "could not be broken." But his two books are not only inconsistent with each other, but this last book is inconsistent with itself. And to the instances which have already been taken notice of in the preceding sections, some few more may here be pointed out.

3. That man must be a moral agent, possessed of every qualification essential to moral agency, previous and in order to his being bound by God's law, is a fundamental point with Mr. M. That man may be bound by the moral law to be a moral agent, to have the qualifications essential to a moral agency, is with him another fundamental point. But as these two fundamental points in his scheme are inconsistent with each other, so they cannot both be true. He says, "Self-love is essentia' to moral agency;" and yet this essential qualification of a mora. agent "is a duty required of us by God's law." But according to him, the law cannot bind us unless we are already moral agents; therefore it cannot bind us to be moral agents, for then a man need not be a moral agent, previous and in order to his being bound by the moral law; which yet he maintains.

4. He says, "that Adam, by becoming guilty, was totally depraved," and yet, according to him, Adam's depravity was not total, for he still continued to exercise that love to himself which the law of God requires, in a conformity to which the image of God consisted, in which he was created. "Perhaps" he also continued to exercise toward God "the love of esteem and benevolence."

5. He says, that the divine law requires us "to love God with all our hearts," and that it also requires us "to love ourselves." And he adds, that this "self-love is absolutely inconsistent with the love of God." So that, according to him, the divine law requires of us, in our guilty state, two duties, in their own nature absolutely inconsistent. And therefore he boldly affirms, that it is "contrary to the law of God" for us, while in our guilty

state, to love God with all our hearts; and yet he says, that God has "given us his law to show us what our duty is," and that we are justly condemned to eternal misery for not obeying of it. And this law he calls "a glorious law," and the character exhibited in it he calls "glorious;" and even supposes that the Son of God became incarnate, lived, and died to "honor this law," and to "vindicate and maintain the honor and dignity of the divine character exhibited in it." Whereas for God to give us a rule of duty, requiring things in their own nature absolutely inconsistent, on pain of eternal death, would be an infinite reproach to the Deity. And to give his Son to die to do honor to such a law, would be inconsistent with all his perfections. And yet he asserts that the gospel, which is supposed to reveal this shocking scene, is "glorious," and even "more glorious than the law;" whereas, if his scheme is true, there is no glory in law or gospel; unless it be glorious to require inconsistencies on pain of eternal death; and glorious to do the highest honor, before the whole intellectual system, to a law in its own nature contradictory.

6. He represents the divine law as requiring things not only inconsistent in their own nature with each other, but also inconsistent with our moral agency; for he says, "A principle of self-love is essential to us moral agents." And yet he asserts that this "self-love must be totally excluded from any place," in the heart of a guilty creature, if he loves God; for "love to God and self-love are absolutely inconsistent." And so, according to him, the moral law requires of us that love to God which is inconsistent with our being moral agents. And yet, according to him, if we are not moral agents, we cannot be bound by the moral law to any obedience at all. Therefore,—

7. He is necessitated to maintain, that man by the fall ceased to be a moral agent, and that it was no longer his duty to love God, for the law did not bind him; "its binding authority respected not his obedience." This was the state of Adam before the revelation of a Mediator, "because it was inconsistent with self-love to exercise true love to God." And he asserts, that "mankind at this day, antecedent to their exercising faith in Christ, are in much the same condition as Adam was after he sinned;" particularly he says, "that they are under the same inability of loving God that Adam was;" namely, it is "absolutely inconsistent with that self-love which is essential to moral agency." And therefore the unregenerate are not moral agents, nor bound by the moral law to obedience. And where there is no law, there is no transgression. And therefore Adam's total depravity, which took place after the first sin, was not of a crimi-

nal nature; and the same is true of the unregenerate now, who "are under the same inability of loving God that Adam was." And therefore total depravity does not disqualify for sealing ordinances.

And yet, in direct contradiction to all this, he affirms, that the unregenerate, while such, are moral agents, bound by the law to the same perfect obedience which was required of Adam before the fall. "This I will readily grant — man is a moral agent, bound by the moral law to love God with all his heart; and therefore God may consistently require this of him, and man is wholly to blame for not loving;" for "nothing short of perfection may be looked upon as the whole of what is required." For he adds, "To suppose that God has receded from his original demand of perfection, made in the law, implies that this law was not good," which is "evidently a reflection upon the Divine Being, whose law it is," and "a reproach upon Christ, who has honored that law." And accordingly he affirms, that "God has given his law to show us what our duty is;" and he adds, "that by the law is the knowledge of sin;" which supposes that "the binding authority of the law does respect our obedience," as much as it did Adam's before the fall; and that therefore we are moral agents, with respect to the law of perfection, as really as he was; and that therefore it is not inconsistent in any child of Adam, with that self-love which is essential to moral agency, to yield a perfect obedience to the moral law; and that, therefore, we are not all depraved by nature. For this supposed inconsistency, he says, "is the true reason, and the only reason," of the depravity of our nature; for had it not been for this inconsistency, Adam would have continued to love God after the fall as he did before; "he would have continued still to exercise the same delight in the divine perfections as he had done before." And yet he had said, that "Adam, by becoming guilty, was totally depraved." And if he was totally depraved, and if total depravity and moral agency are consistent; if God "may consistently require us to love God with all our hearts," and if we "are wholly to blame" for not loving; then our total depravity is totally criminal. But to persist obstinately in this crime, that is, to continue impenitent and unreconciled to God, after all the means used with us by God himself, disqualifies a man to be active in sealing God's covenant, for the same reason that obstinacy in any other crime does. Or, if he will say, "to love God is the same thing as to love misery," and so our depravity is a calamity, but not a crime; then he must say, that we cease to be moral agents, and the law ceases to bind us; which, to use his own words, "implies that this law was not good, which is evidently a reflection upon the

Divine Being, whose law it is, and a reproach upon Christ, who has honored that law."

7. Mr. M. is very zealous for a *preparatory work*, and to have the unregenerate sinner *strive;* but without any consistency with himself. For, on his scheme, what can the sinner consistently strive to do? Not to love that character of God which is exhibited in the law; for this, according to him, is the same thing as to "love his own misery," which is "contrary to the law," and in its own nature impossible. Not to love that character of God which is revealed in the gospel, — for the unenlightened sinner is by him supposed not to know it, — and to love an unknown character, implies a contradiction, and so is absolutely impossible. What, then, would Mr. M. have the sinner do, or strive to do? Let us attend to his own words. God "has given us his law, not only to show us what our duty is, but also to set light before us, whereby we may obtain a proper conviction of our guilt." "By the law is the knowledge of sin." He has repeatedly commanded them to consider their ways; and calls upon them to exercise their reason. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." But if God has given us his law to show us what our duty is, and if by the law is the knowledge of sin, and if we consider this, and if we exercise our reason on the subject, then we must conclude, that it is now every day the duty of all mankind to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law; and that it is the duty of all to whom the gospel comes, to love that character of God which is revealed in the gospel; and that it is exceeding sinful to live in the neglect of these duties. But if a sinner should thus begin to consider and exercise his reason, Mr. M. would soon stop him, by saying, "The unenlightened do not know that character of God which is revealed in the gospel, and so cannot love it; and to love that character of God which is revealed in the law, is the same thing as to love their own misery, which is contrary to the law, and ought not to be done." What then shall the sinner do? or what shall he strive to do? Mr. M. says, that "such a conviction of our guilt, and just desert of suffering the curse of the law, as shall humble us, and bring us to submit to a sovereign God, is necessary to fit and prepare our hearts to close with Christ." But by what means shall such convictions be obtained? How will you convince the sinner, that he deserves eternal damnation for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them, particularly for neglecting to love God, while he firmly believes, that "the love of God and self-love are absolutely inconsistent"? and that, therefore, it is "contrary to the

law," which requires self-love, to love God. The more the sinner considers, and exercises his reason, the more clearly will he see the inconsistency of these things. Or will Mr. M. tell the sinner, (as in p. 53,) to strive "to obtain those discoveries of God through Christ, by which he will be reconciled to God"? But why, seeing, on Mr. M.'s scheme, the sinner has no prejudices against this character of God to combat and strive against, but is naturally disposed to love it as soon as known — why, if this be the case, should not the discoveries, already made in the Bible, be immediately received and embraced? Did not Jacob love Rachel the first time he saw her? or did he spend two or three months, or as many years, after the first sight of her person, striving for a discovery of her beauty?

8. Mr. M. says, that to Adam, after his fall, it must appear, "in every view, inconsistent with the divine perfections," that he should escape the curse of the law. But in these circumstances, "to delight in God was the same thing as to delight in his own misery;" and therefore he adds, "that Adam, by becoming guilty, was totally depraved," because now "the love of God and self-love were absolutely inconsistent." And he says, "This was the true reason, and the only reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall." And therefore, as soon as a door of hope was opened by the revelation of a Mediator, Adam instantly returned to the love of God; "and there is nothing in our fallen circumstances to prevent" our doing so too; and that without any new principle of grace. But if these things are true, it will follow, 1. That as soon as any man believes that there is forgiveness with God for sinners through Jesus Christ, he will cease to be totally depraved; because now "the true reason, and the only reason," of his total depravity, is removed; and therefore, 2. Every man who believes the gospel to be true, is regenerate; and therefore, 3. Every man who knows that he believes the gospel to be true, does with equal certainty know that he is regenerate; because this belief and regeneration are infallibly connected, according to Mr. M. But, 4. According to him, "none but such as profess the Christian religion ought to be admitted into the church." And, 5. According to him, none ought to profess that they believe the gospel to be true, unless they are infallibly certain that they do believe it to be true. For, speaking of the profession which is made when any join with the church, he says, "Suppose a man brought into a civil court, as a witness to a particular fact; and, being sworn, should positively declare the thing to be fact; and after he comes out of court, his neighbor should ask him whether he had any

certain knowledge of the fact, about which he had given his evidence; and he should say, 'No, I am not certain of it; but I hope it is so; it is my prevailing opinion; although I must confess I have many doubts and fears whether there is any truth in it or not.' Would not all mankind agree to call such a one a perjured person, who had taken a false oath?" No one, therefore, according to his scheme, may profess that he believes the gospel to be true, unless he is infallibly certain of the fact, that he does believe it to be true. But if regeneration and this belief are infallibly connected, then this professor must be infallibly certain of his regeneration; and so not one soul, on Mr. Mr. M.'s scheme, may or can be admitted into the church, as graceless. And thus his scheme overthrows itself.

Nor is there any way to avoid this, but for Mr. M. to say, "A man may be infallibly certain of the truth of the gospel, and so of God's readiness to be reconciled to sinners, as therein revealed; and yet, after all, remain totally depraved, and an enemy to God." But to say this, would be to give up the fundamental principle on which his whole scheme is built, namely, that "the true and the only reason" of total depravity is the apprehension, that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections to forgive sin; in which view "self-love and the love of God are inconsistent." And if this is given up, his whole scheme sinks of course; for if this is not the true and only reason of total depravity, he is wholly wrong, from the foundation to the top stone. And if an apprehension that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections to forgive sin, is the true and only reason of total depravity, then a belief that God can consistently forgive sin, would at once regenerate us; for it is an old maxim, Remove the cause and the effect will cease. Every man, therefore, according to Mr. M., who believes the gospel to be true, is at once reconciled to God. Nor may any be received into the church until they believe it to be true. And so no graceless man, as such, can be admitted into the church; because no infidel, as such, may be admitted; and all but infidels are regenerate, if Mr. M.'s scheme is true. And then the scheme of religion which he has advanced, in order to support the external covenant, were it true, would effectually overthrow the grand point he had in view.

SECTION XI.

THE EXTRAORDINARY METHODS MR. MATHER HAS TAKEN TO SUPPORT HIS SCHEME, AND KEEP HIMSELF IN COUNTENANCE.

THE ordinary methods of supporting religious principles by Scripture and reason, which Mr. M. has taken to support his external covenant, we have already attended to. And I think Mr. M. is much to be commended for coming out boldly, like an honest man, and giving the public such an honest account of his scheme of religion, by which he designed to support what he had advanced in his former piece concerning the external covenant. If every writer on that side of the question would do the same, the controversy would soon come to an end.

But there are various other methods, which Mr. M. has taken to keep himself in countenance, and to persuade his readers that his scheme is right, and that the plan is wrong on which the churches in New England were formed, when this country was first settled; and particularly that the synod at Saybrook were wrong, in that resolve which they unanimously came into, namely, "That none ought to be admitted as members, in order to full communion in all the special ordinances of the gospel, but such as credibly profess a cordial subjection to Jesus Christ;" various other methods, I say, of a different nature, and which are not so commendable.

1. One extraordinary method he takes to keep himself in countenance is, to pretend that I had "wholly misrepresented his sentiments," and given his scheme "the bad name of a graceless covenant," and pointed "all my arguments, not against any thing that he had written," nor so much as "essayed to confute one single argument" that he had offered. This pretence is very extraordinary. 1. Because, if his covenant is not a graceless covenant, it will not answer the end by him proposed. For if it does not promise its blessings to graceless men, as such, upon graceless conditions, then graceless men, as such, with only graceless qualifications, cannot enter into it; for he affirms, that none can consistenly profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without the most full and perfect assurance. 2. This pretence is very extraordinary, because he had, in his first book, declared his external covenant, in express terms, to be "distinct from the covenant of grace;" and in his second book sets himself professedly to prove the same point over again. But if his external covenant

is "distinct from the covenant of grace," it is either the covenant of works, or a graceless covenant, or a covenant which requires no conditions at all; for no other sort of covenant can be thought of. But if Mr. M.'s external covenant is absolute and unconditional, then a Pagan, a Turk, or a Jew, as such, hath as good right to the Lord's table, as to hear the gospel preached. And if his external covenant is the same with the covenant of works, then no mere man since the fall is qualified to join with the church. And if his external covenant is the covenant of grace, then no graceless man, as such, is qualified to enter into it and seal it. It is, therefore, nay, it must be, a graceless covenant, or nothing at all. 3. This pretence is very extraordinary, because Mr. M. was so pinched with what I had advanced against his scheme, that he had no way to get rid of my arguments, but to deny first principles, and give up the doctrines contained in the public approved formulas of the church of Scotland, and the churches in New England, and advance a new scheme of religion, never before published in New England. And why did not he point out at least one single argument of his, which he judged to be unanswered? Or why did not he mention one single instance, wherein I had represented his covenant to be more graceless than it was? Or what need was there, if I had said nothing to the purpose, to expose himself and his cause, by the publication of such a system of new notions, to make all the country stare? *

2. The loud outcry which he makes of new divinity! new divinity! is another of the extraordinary methods which he takes to keep himself in countenance. And it is very extraordinary in him to raise this cry, on this occasion, in answer to me, and that when he himself was writing such an answer. 1. Because I was justifying the old scheme, on which our churches in this country were originally settled—the good old way; and

* Mr. M. offered five arguments, in his first book, to support his external covenant. These five arguments the reader may find answered in my former piece. And if he will read my piece through, he may find the two points fully proved, which I undertook to prove, on which the whole controversy turns, namely, That there is but one covenant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals, even the covenant of grace; and that the doctrine of an external graceless covenant is unscriptural. Some wonder why Mr. M. did not make a particular reply, and wonder more why, instead of a particular reply, he should advance such an inconsistent, absurd, shocking scheme of religion, in support of the external covenant, which, instead of supporting, rather tends to sink it. For, say they, if the external covenant cannot be supported without going into this scheme of religion, we will give it up. But I wonder not at Mr. M.'s conduct in all this. The external covenant cannot be supported but by overthrowing the Scripture scheme of religion, and establishing Mr. M.'s scheme in its room. His scheme of religion is absolutely necessary to support his external covenant. Without the introduction of Mr. M.'s new scheme of religion, my former piece can receive no answer at all. He could not be silent. He must take this way, or none at all.

he wrote with a design to bring in a new scheme, called by the name of the external covenant, both name and thing unknown in all the public formulas approved by our churches, and absolutely inconsistent with some of the fundamental articles of our confession of faith and catechisms. 2. Because, in order to justify the good old way, and confute his new scheme, I built my arguments on the good old Protestant doctrines of the perfection of the divine law, and total depravity, as held forth in Scripture, and in our public formulas, without any one new sentiment; yea, without expressing old sentiments in stronger language than the language of Scripture, and of that confession of faith, which Mr. M. himself professes to believe; while, on the other hand, Mr. M. was writing not only in defence of a new scheme, but endeavoring to justify it by a whole system of new divinity, never before advanced, so far as I know, in New England. However, it is not entirely new. It was some years ago published in London, by Mr. Cudworth, and an answer to it was printed in Boston, 1762, in "An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel," before referred to.

3. Another extraordinary method which he takes to keep himself in countenance, is, to impute the most absurd and odious doctrines to those whom he opposes, which neither they nor any Christian writer ever believed to be true; particularly, "that the enmity of the carnal mind against God consists in disinterested malice; that in regeneration, new natural faculties are created in us; that the unregenerate, being without these new natural faculties, let their hearts be ever so good, are under a natural impossibility of hearkening to the call of the gospel; that we must be willing to be damned in order to be prepared for Christ; that Christ has no hand in our reconciliation to God." To be sure, I was never acquainted with any man, or any book, which held these points. Should it be affirmed concerning a very poor and very lazy man, that, although he is convinced in his conscience, that it is his duty and interest to be industrious, yet the more he thinks of it, the more averse he feels to it, would this amount to saying, that this lazy man has a disinterested malice against industry? Or, should it be affirmed concerning the unregenerate, that God hath not given them eyes to see nor ears to hear, would this amount to saying, that they are destitute of eyes or ears, considered as natural faculties, and so can neither see nor hear; and therefore are not at all to blame for their spiritual blindness and deafness? Or, should a wise and good father, when his impudent, haughty child, about to be corrected for a crime, insolently says, "Well, father, if you do whip me, I shall never love you again as long as I live;" should a

wise and good father say to such a child, "You deserve to be whipped, nor will I ever forgive you until you will own that it is good enough for you, and that it is not a blemish, but a beauty, in your father's character, to be disposed to maintain good government in his house," would that amount to saying, that the child must be willing to be whipped in order to prepare him for a pardon? Or if, by the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, communicated through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator, as the fruits of his purchase, the holiness and justice of the divine nature are viewed as a beauty in the divine character, by the true penitent, will it hence follow, "that there was no need of Christ to die, or to be exalted, that through him, repentance and remission of sins might be given unto us, consistently with the divine law"? It is true that there is no need of Christ to make us amends for the injury done us in the divine law, and so to reconcile our angry minds to the Deity, and bring us to forgive our Maker. Such a Christ would suit the taste of a carnal heart. But a true penitent, having a new taste, already grants that God and his law are wholly right, perfect in beauty, without a blemish, prior to the consideration of the gift of Christ; and this prepares him to see the wisdom and grace of God, in giving his Son to die upon the cross, in the manner, and for the purpose, set forth in the gospel. (Rom. iii. 25. 1 Cor. i. 18.)

4. Another extraordinary method Mr. M. has taken, is to insinuate, that the sacramental controversy turns on these absurd doctrines; whereas, in truth, he cannot produce an instance of any one writer, on our side of the question, who ever believed these absurd doctrines, much less ever built his arguments on them. Let him read Mr. Richard Baxter, Dr. Watts, Dr. Guise, Dr. Doddridge, Mr. Henry, Mr. Flavel, and look through the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and read over President Edwards, Mr. Green, and others in these parts of the world, who have written on the subject, and he will not find a syllable to countenance him in such an insinuation. Nay, the chief of the arguments used, by writers on our side of the question, are conclusive, to prove that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other covenant, without entering into any dispute about the perfection of the divine law, total depravity, regeneration, etc. The point is so clear and plain, that Calvinists, Arminians, Neonomians, Arians, etc., have agreed in this, while they have differed in almost every thing else. If we may believe Dr. Increase Mather, it was, in his day, the "common doctrine" of Protestants in opposition to Papists, "that it is a justifying faith only which

giveth right to baptism before God," how much soever they differed in other matters. And as to all the Orthodox, the celebrated Dr. Van Mastricht, in his Treatise on Regeneration, says, "As to the baptism of adults,—that, if rightly administered, doth, by the consent of all the Orthodox, certainly presuppose regeneration as already effected." But this leads me to observe, —

5. Another very extraordinary method Mr. M. takes to keep himself in countenance, is by misrepresenting that plan, unanimously agreed to by the synod at Saybrook, and on which the churches in New England, in general, were formed at the first settling of the country, which alone I was endeavoring to justify, "as a very groundless and unreasonable notion of the Anabaptists, in which Dr. Bellamy and a few others have joined with them;" and at the same time claiming the Westminster Assembly, Mr. Shepard, Mr. Jonathan Dickinson, and Mr. Peter Clark, as friends to his external covenant; so that one would think, that scarce any are on our side of the question, but the Anabaptists. Now, this is very extraordinary in Mr. M. 1. Because, in his former book, he speaks a very different language, well knowing how the matter really stands. "Shall I then prevail with them to lay aside all prejudice, all attachment to received maxims, all veneration for great names?" For he had before him the sentiments of the Protestant world, collected by the late learned Mr. Foxcroft, in an appendix to President Edwards's Inquiry, etc., and he well knew that received maxims and great names stood in the way of his new scheme. 2. It is very extraordinary that he should say, that his external covenant is included in the covenant of grace, described by the Assembly of divines at Westminster, when, as has been before shown, the doctrines of the perfection of the divine law, and of total depravity, as held by that Assembly, are inconsistent with the existence of his external covenant. And in their Confession of Faith, (chap. 29,) they say, "All ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they continue such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereto." Whereas, the very professed design of his external covenant is to open a door, that ungodly men, as such, should be admitted to partake of these holy mysteries. And, 3. It is equally extraordinary that he should pretend that Mr. Jonathan Dickinson was a friend to his external covenant, when, in his Dialogue on the Divine Right of Infant Baptism, he proves that the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii.) was the covenant of grace itself, in opposition to the Anabaptists, who,

with Mr. M., maintain the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii.) was not the covenant of grace; and, having proved that covenant to be the covenant of grace, then proceeds, on this hypothesis, to prove the divine right of infant baptism. Dr. Gill wrote an answer to this piece of Mr. Dickinson's: Mr. Peter Clark wrote a reply to Dr. Gill, in which he spends above a hundred pages in proving the covenant in Gen. xvii. to be "a pure covenant of grace," in answering Dr. Gill's objections, which are the same for substance with Mr. M.'s Five Arguments, in his first book, and in establishing infant baptism on this foundation. And he expressly affirms, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. And if, without regeneration, no man can enter into the kingdom of God, then surely not into covenant with God." But the unregenerate, as such, can enter into covenant with God, on the plan of Mr. M.'s external covenant. And yet Mr. M. pretends that there is "no material difference" between these authors and his scheme. But, 4. It is more extraordinary still, that Mr. M. should bring in Mr. Shepard as a friend to his external covenant, when the piece he refers to is not wrote on Mr. M.'s scheme, but on a scheme essentially different; and when Mr. Shepard, in his Sermons on the Parable of the Ten Virgins, has so plainly declared his mind. These are his very words: attend to them, candid reader, and say, was Mr. Shepard in Mr. M.'s scheme?

"We may see hence one just ground of that diligent and narrow search and trial churches here do or should make of all those whom they receive to be fellow-members. The Lord Jesus will make a very strict search and examination of wise and foolish, when he comes, and will put a difference between them then. May not men nor churches imitate the Lord Jesus according to their light now? If indeed all the congregation of the baptized were holy, then, as Korah said, they take too much upon them. If Christ, at his coming, would make neither examination nor separation, not only of people baptized at large, but of professors, and glorious professors of his truth and name; if churches were not set to discern between harlots and virgins, foolish virgins and wise, as much as in them lies, that so some of the glory of Christ may be seen in his churches here, as well as at the last day; then the gate might be opened wide, and flung off the hinges too, for all comers; and you might call the churches of Christ the inn and tavern of Christ to receive all strangers, if they will pay for what they call for, and bear scot and lot in the town, and not the house and temple of Christ only to entertain his friends. But, beloved, the church hath

the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and what they bind and loose, following the example and rule of Christ, is bound and loosed in heaven, and they judge in the room of Christ. (1 Cor. v. 4, 5. 2 Cor. ii. 11.) Whom the church casts out and bids depart to Satan, Christ doth. Whom the church receives to itself, Christ doth. We should receive in none but such as have visible right to Christ, and communion of saints. None have a right to Christ in his ordinances, but such as shall have communion with Christ at his coming to judge the world. Hence, if we could be so eagle-eyed as to discern them now that are hypocrites, we should exclude them now, as Christ will, because they have no right. But that we cannot do; the Lord will therefore do it for his churches. But yet let the churches learn from this to do what they can for the Lord now. The apostle gives a sad charge, (Heb. xii. 15,) "Look diligently, lest a root of bitterness grow up." The apostle doth not say, it is no matter what roots you set in Christ's garden; only, when they spring up, and begin to seed and infect others, then have a care of them; but look there be not a root there. *Look diligently to it.* It is ill counsel to the gardener to say, Have a care to weed your garden; but it is no matter, God looks not that you should be careful of your seed, so long as it be seed. Nay, the Lord, that forbids me to suffer weeds to grow, forbids my carelessness in sowing what seeds I please. It is the judgment of some divines, that the first sin of Adam and his wife was in suffering the serpent to enter into the garden, uncalled for. *The ruin of a church may be the letting in of some one ill member.*

"*Objection.* But the primitive church never received in any with such strict confessions and large examination; three thousand in a day were admitted.

"*Ans.* I remember a godly divine, in answering an objection of late repentance from the example of the thief, having whipped it with many other rods, at the last lasheth it with this — *It is an extraordinary case;* and hence not to be brought in for an extraordinary example. Hence he speaks thus: when, therefore, the time comes that Christ shall come and be crucified again, and thou one of the thieves to be crucified with him, and it fall out that thou be the best of the two, then shalt thou be saved by Christ, that despising Christ now puts off thy repentance till then; so I say here, there is somewhat imitable and ordinary in the apostle's example, in admitting three thousand in a day, but something unusual, and far different from our condition now; and therefore that I would say, when the time comes, that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh; and that time

is known to be the spring tide, and large measure of the Spirit, when ministers are so honored as to convert many thousands at a sermon; and so God and reason call for quickness; when elders of churches are as sharp-sighted as the apostles, when the conversion of men also shall be most eminent, and that in such places where it is death, or half hanging, to profess the Lord Jesus; as that they shall be pricked at their hearts, gladly receive the word, lay down their necks on the block, cast down all their estates at the church's feet, out of love to God's ordinances; when men shall not have Christian education, the example and crowd of Christians, from the teeth outwardly, to press them to the door of the church, as those times had not; then, for my part, if three hundred thousand were converted, I should receive them as gladly, and as manifestly, as they receive Christ. But truly there is such little takings now, that we have leisure enough to look upon our money, and the hypocrisy of the world gives us good reason to stay and see."—*Mr. Shepard's Sermons on the Parable*, Part 2, p. 184.

This sermon was preached at Cambridge, near Boston, about the year 1640, and so about one hundred and thirty years ago, ten years after they began to settle Boston, by one of the most godly and most celebrated ministers then in the country, a few years before his death. And this passage shows us the spirit of the godly in New England, in those early days. And to all godly people in the country, the name of Mr. Shepard is precious to this day, and Mr. M. knew it; and therefore, to keep himself in countenance, thinks fit to bring in him as a friend to his external covenant. But is not this an extraordinary method? To omit the rest, we will mention but one instance more.

6. Another extraordinary method Mr. M. takes to support his scheme, is to bring arguments against us, built on principles which he himself does not believe to be true; and which, if they were true, would infallibly overthrow his own scheme, nay, and persist in such arguments, after their fallacy has been pointed out, without saying one word in excuse for such a piece of conduct.

Thus he insists upon it, that if infants may have the seal of the covenant without saving grace, then also may the adult; and therefore saving grace is not needful to qualify any one for sealing ordinances. And therefore the covenant to be sealed is not the covenant of grace, but an external covenant, "distinct from the covenant of grace," which only requires, as a necessary qualification for sealing ordinances, that sinners should be under such "convictions," as to "come to a fixed

resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty." But have all infants these convictions, and such a fixed resolution? Does he believe they have? Is there any evidence of it? No; he does not believe they have. Nor is there any evidence, that there ever was one infant since the world began, that had these convictions, and such a fixed resolution. What, then, does Mr. M. mean? Does he mean to give up infant baptism? No, by no means. What then does he mean? Odd as it is, he means to confute our scheme by an argument which confutes his own; that is, by an argument built on a principle which he himself does not believe to be true, namely, that the same qualifications are necessary in infants as in the adult, to qualify them for baptism; for Mr. M. does not believe this principle to be true; for he does not believe that infants need any qualification at all. And yet he does believe that the adult must have some qualification. Now, how extraordinary is it for a man of learning to conduct thus, and to go on and persevere in this conduct without a blush, or the least excuse, in the sight of all the country, after the absurdity had been pointed out before his eyes, in my former book!

And thus, again, he insists upon it, that if saving grace is necessary, then no man can, with a good conscience, join with the church, without assurance, an assurance equal to that certainty which we have of facts, which we see with our own eyes, and to the truth of which we can give oath before any civil court. But "ninety-nine in a hundred of true believers" are destitute of this assurance, he says, and therefore saving grace is not needful. Nothing more is needful than to come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty. But does Mr. M. believe that no man can, with a good conscience, join with the church, without being thus infallibly certain that he has the requisite qualifications? for on the supposed truth of this proposition is his argument built. But does Mr. M. believe this proposition? does he teach his people to believe it? had all his church members this high degree of infallible assurance, that they had the requisite qualifications, when they joined with the church? and have they the infallible assurance every time they attend sealing ordinances — an assurance equal to that certainty which they have that they ever saw the sun shine — that they "are come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty"? Does he insist upon it in his public preaching, and in his private instructions, that without this high degree of assurance, without this infallible certainty, they cannot with a good conscience come to baptism or to the Lord's table? that "they are guilty

of gross prevarication, and double-dealing with God," if they do? because no man ought to come without this infallible certainty, that he has the requisite qualifications: I say, does Mr. M. believe these things himself? or does he teach them to his own people? I appeal to his conscience. I appeal to his people for my witnesses. Mr. M. does not believe that men must have this infallible certainty that they have the requisite qualifications, in order to attend sealing ordinances with a good conscience; nor does he teach this doctrine to his people. What, then, does he mean, in all he says upon this subject to us? Why, he means to confute our scheme, by an argument built on a principle which he does not believe to be true; and which, were it true, would effectually overthrow his own scheme. And all this, after the fallacy of this manner of reasoning had been pointed out before his eyes, as clear as the sun, in Mr. Edward's last piece on the sacramental controversy, to which no answer has ever been made. Now, is it not extraordinary, that a man of so good sense should urge against us arguments built on principles which he himself does not believe; and which, if they were true, would effectually overthrow his own scheme? For no unregenerate man in this world is, or ever was, or ever will be, while such, infallibly certain, as he is of what he sees with his eyes, that his resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty, is "fixed," so that his religion will not prove like that of the stony and thorny ground hearers. For if the common Protestant doctrine of the saints' perseverance is scriptural, yet Mr. M. does not believe the doctrine of the perseverance of graceless sinners, in their religious resolutions, is taught in Scripture. So that there is no possible way in which an awakened sinner can be certain that his resolution is "fixed," without an immediate revelation from heaven, to give him this assurance. But Mr. M. does not believe, that an immediate revelation from heaven ever was, or ever will be, made for this purpose. But he well knows, that without any such revelation, Peter was able to say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." And he well knew that the saints in the apostolic age are spoken of, without exception, as having received the spirit of adoption, whereby they cried, Abba, Father; with an assurance that they were the children of God. (Rom. viii. 14—16.) Nor is there one instance, among all the apostolic converts, that can be mentioned, of a doubting saint; nor does it appear, by the acts of the apostles, or by their epistles, but that "assurance did in those days attend the first acts of faith among all their converts." (See Acts ii. 41—47; viii. 39;

x. 44—47; xvi. 30—34. For, to use the apostolic language, being justified by faith, they had peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God; because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. (Rom. v. 15.) And they knew that they had passed from death to life. (1 John iii. 14.) And this renders the conduct of Mr. M. so much the more extraordinary, that he, with so much zeal, should push an argument, which, were it well grounded, is much more against his own scheme than it is against the apostolic practice. For it does not appear but that their converts universally knew that they were passed from death to life; whereas it is capable of full proof, that no one unregenerate man ever did know that his religious resolutions were "fixed," so that his goodness should not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew, which quickly passeth away.

Besides, we are naturally as conscious of our volitions and affections, as we are of our speculations; and therefore we are as capable of knowing what we choose and love, as what we believe; and therefore we may as well know that we love God and Christ, if we really do, as know that we have right speculative ideas of the true and real character of God and Christ, and of the doctrines of revealed religion, in which they are exhibited. Many are confident they believe aright, who are heretics; and many are confident they love aright, who are hypocrites: and yet this hinders not but that true saints, who believe aright, and love in sincerity, may know it; and know the one as well as the other. And it cannot be proved, but that there are as many who have doubts about the truth of gospel doctrines as there are that have doubts about the sincerity of their love to gospel doctrines. It cannot be proved, that there is one professor who doubts the sincerity of his love, who has an infallible assurance which is the right scheme of religion, among all the schemes in vogue. It is very evident, that there is a great degree of scepticism among the professors of Christianity in this age, and as much among the learned as among the unlearned; as is obvious to every one who is acquainted with books and men. And, for aught that appears, it might be as difficult to find men who believe Christianity to be true — real Christianity I mean — to that degree as to have no doubts about what is truth, as to find men that love it, so as to have no doubts about their love. This is certain, that it was the constant doctrine of Mr. Stoddard, that no unregenerate man does know the gospel to be true, as every one knows who is acquainted with his writings. And it is also certain, that in the apostolic age, it was the universally received doctrine of the whole Christian church, that "who-

soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." (1 John v. 1.) And it was in that age believed, that the unregenerate, however they might, for a time, believe and rejoice, yet neither their faith nor their affections were "fixed," because they had no root in themselves; and therefore in time of temptation they would fall away from both. (Matt. xiii.) And therefore, if we open the door wide enough to let in the unregenerate, as such, into the church, we must not insist on their being "fixed" what to believe, or "fixed" what to do; for there is no root in them. Much less must we affirm, that they must be "infallibly certain" that they are fixed, when, if the Bible is the word of God, it is infallibly certain that they are not fixed. And their very confidence, that they are fixed, is a full proof that they do not understand and believe the gospel, which declares that they are not fixed, that they have no root in themselves.

But to return: Our author says, "If it is a real gracious state, that gives us a real right to join with the church, then it is a known gracious state that gives us a known right." And he adds, "This is a self-evident proposition." And this he says in order to prove, "that no man can, with a good conscience, make this profession, without as certain a knowledge of the gracious state of his own heart, as he must have of any particular fact about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court." But if this argument is conclusive, then his own scheme is overthrown. For, turn the tables, and the argument stands thus: "If it is real orthodoxy, that gives us a right to join with the church, then it is known orthodoxy, that gives us a known right;" and I may add, "This is a self-evident proposition;" and therefore, according to Mr. M., "no man can, with a good conscience, join with the church, without as certain a knowledge of his orthodoxy, as he must have of any particular fact about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court." So then, according to Mr. M., unregenerate, graceless men must be as certain which of all the various schemes of religion in vogue, in the Christian world, is the right one, as they are of any fact which they see with their eyes, to the truth of which they can make oath; or they cannot, with a good conscience, join with church; that is, they must have as high a degree of infallibility as the apostles had under inspiration, or they cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church. But does Mr. M. believe this? Does he look upon his graceless, conscientious church members as infallible as the apostles?

To say, that real orthodoxy is not a requisite qualification, is to give up his own scheme. To say, that although real orthodoxy is a requisite qualification, yet a degree of infallibility,

equal to that which the apostles had under inspiration, is not necessary to qualify a man, with a good conscience, to join with the church, is to give up his argument. For the apostles were not more certain, which was the orthodox scheme of religion, than we are of facts, which we see with our eyes, and which we can swear positively that we did see. And our certainty must be equal to this, he says, or we cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church. Every conscientious, graceless church member, therefore, according to Mr. M., is as infallible, in points of orthodoxy, as was the apostle Paul. But does Mr. M. believe this? No, by no means. What, then, does he mean? Why, he means to confute our scheme by an argument built on a principle which he himself does not believe to be true; and which, were it true, would overthrow his own scheme.

Obj. But I know that I believe such and such doctrines; yea, I can swear I believe them.

Ans. You can swear that you believe your own creed; but can you swear that your own creed is orthodox? For not a confident belief, but real orthodoxy is, according to Mr. M., a requisite qualification to church membership. Therefore, according to him, you must be certain that your creed is orthodox; even as certain as you are of facts which you see, and to the truth of which you can make oath before the civil magistrate; which is a degree of certainty equal to that which the apostles had under inspiration.

The Arians, the Socinians, the Pelagians, the Papists, etc., can swear that they believe their schemes; but does this qualify them to be church members? Would Mr. M. receive them to communion? If so, then it is no matter what scheme of religion men believe, if they do but believe it confidently. And then orthodoxy is not a requisite qualification for church membership, but rather bigotry!

Our author says, "This affair of covenanting with God," Moses styles (Deut. xxix. 14) "this covenant and this oath;" and "will it do to tell people, that they may give a positive evidence, when they have only a prevailing opinion about the fact?" that is, will it do to tell people that they may enter into covenant with God, and bind themselves under the solemnity of an oath, as the Israelites did to keep covenant, (Deut. xxvi. 27,) "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice," when they have only a prevailing opinion, that they have such a heart in them; but have not a certain knowledge of it, as they have of facts, which, under oath, they can positively declare to be true?

Ans. 1. When men have not such a heart in them, they are not qualified to enter into this covenant and this oath. And therefore, if unregeneracy consists in being without such a heart, and in having a heart opposite hereunto, agreeable to St. Paul's doctrine, (Rom. viii. 7,) then unregeneracy disqualifies us for entering into covenant with God.

2. No man can, with a good conscience, enter into this covenant, unless he is conscious to himself, that he has such a heart, to such a degree of clearness, as to be satisfied in his conscience, that he indeed has such a heart. And therefore, for men who know that they have not such a heart, to enter into this covenant, is gross immorality. But he who is satisfied in his conscience, that he has such a heart, may with a good conscience enter into this covenant; that is, his conscience will approve of his conduct in so doing.

3. A man may be satisfied, in his conscience, that he has such a heart by prevailing evidence, short of strict certainty. For instance, Mr. Mather was satisfied, in his conscience, that it was his duty to write in the defence of the external covenant, upon prevailing evidence of its truth; but yet, if it were put to him, he would not positively declare under oath, that he knows it to be true, as he knows the truth of facts which he sees with his eyes; for he declares in his preface, "Yet I am not so fond of my own judgment, or tenacious of my own practice, but that I stand ready to give them both up when any one shall do the friendly office of setting light before me." And therefore he cannot swear that his scheme is the true Scripture scheme. He knows that he has written on this subject. This fact he is certain of. He could give oath to this before a civil court; nor could he give up the truth of this fact, let all the light in the world be set before him; nor could he, with a good conscience, offer to give up the truth of this fact, on any condition; because he knows that the fact is true. He knows it with certainty, with infallible certainty. But he has not equal certainty that his scheme is true. It was only his prevailing opinion. And so, he offers to give it up on further light. Yet he acted conscientiously in writing in its defence; that is, his conscience, instead of condemning, approved of his conduct. For the truth of this I appeal to Mr. M. The application is easy. And yet, —

4. It is readily granted, that we are to blame for every wrong judgment we make in moral matters, relative both to truth and duty, how conscientious soever we were in making the judgment. Thus, for instance, Paul, before his conversion, was conscientious in judging and acting against Christianity; but

still he was to blame for judging and acting as he did. And if Mr. M.'s external covenant is unscriptural, how conscientious soever he has been in believing and acting as he has, yet he is to blame. So, if we judge that we have such a heart, when in fact we have not, how conscientious soever we have been, yet still we are criminal; for we might have known better. It was our fault that we did not know better. And in this world, or in the next, we shall know that the blame lies at our door. Therefore, —

5. Those words of our blessed Savior ought to be attended to and regarded by every one who entertains thoughts of making a profession of his holy religion. (Luke xiv. 25—35.) And there went great multitudes with him, and instead of pressing them to an inconsiderate profession of his religion, as a means of their conversion, he turned and said unto them, If any man come to me, by an open, public profession, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, so as to have a heart to give up all for my sake, he cannot be my disciple; but will in time of trial desert me. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, with a heart to suffer every thing for my sake, cannot be my disciple; but will in time of trial desert me. Therefore, consider what you do. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost? etc. So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. My disciples are the salt of the earth. Salt is good, if it is salt; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is good for nothing. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill: but men cast it out, as good for nothing. And what are such disciples good for, who will desert me in time of trial? Attend to what I say. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

CONCLUSION.

Mr. M., speaking of our sentiments of religion, as contained in President Edwards's Treatise concerning Religious Affections, which is beyond doubt one of the best books that have been published on experimental religion and vital piety since the days of inspiration, says, "These sentiments are surprisingly spread in the land, in the present day." Yes, and always will spread among people, in proportion as true religion revives and spreads. Nor am I without hopes, that Mr. M., should he thor-

oughly look into the scheme, and get a right understanding of it, would yet himself become a proselyte to it; and if he should become a proselyte to it, he would soon give up his external covenant, as being wholly inconsistent with it.

And it is quite certain, that when the divine promises, scattered through the sacred writings, relative to the glorious prevalence of true Christianity, come to be accomplished, that Mr. M.'s graceless covenant will become a useless and an impracticable thing. When nations shall be born in a day, when all the people shall be righteous, when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea; people will not desire to make a graceless profession. Nay, they can never be persuaded to do it in that day; for then they will love Christ more than father, or mother, or wife, or children, or houses, or lands; yea, more than their own lives. And men who really love their wives and children, are able, ordinarily, to say with truth and a good conscience, that they do love them. Yea, it would be thought a sign, that men generally, if not universally, hated their wives, in any kingdom, city, or town, should it be known, that ninety-nine in a hundred of them had such doubts, that with a good conscience they could not say that they loved them. Mr. Stoddard, in his Treatise concerning the Nature of Conversion, says, "We do not know of one godly man in the Scripture, that was under darkness about his sincerity." And our Catechism says, "The benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are *assurance of God's love*, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end." And when religion revives in its purity and glory, assurance will become as common a thing among professors, as it was among the apostolic converts, in the apostolic churches. And even now, should a man and woman present themselves before a clergyman, to enter into the marriage covenant, and at the same time declare, that they doubted their love to each other to such a degree, that with a good conscience they could not give their consent to the form of words in common use, because that would imply a profession of mutual love, no judicious man would think them fit to be married. The application is easy.

Nothing renders a graceless covenant needful, but the prevalence of gracelessness among our people. For did our people all of them love Christ more than father and mother, wife and children, no man would desire to have the covenant of grace set aside, and a graceless covenant substituted in its room, in our churches. When, therefore, that day comes in which Satan shall

be bound, who at present deceives the nations of the earth, that he may deceive them no more; when the great harvest comes, of which what happened in the apostolic age was but the first fruits; and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands becomes great, and fills the whole earth, and the God of heaven set up a kingdom, and all people, nations, and languages, serve him, and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, are given to the people of the saints of the Most High, and all dominions shall serve him; then, even then, true godliness will be universally professed and universally practised.

Since, therefore, this graceless covenant will ere long be universally exploded, and rooted up, as shall every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted, why should not we all now unite to give it up, and to invite our people to become Christians indeed, to profess and practise according to the true import of their baptism? It is as much their duty, and as much their interest, to become Christians now, as it will be in any future period of their lives. They have from God no leave to delay. Thanks be to God, "that these sentiments are surprisingly spreading in this land, in the present day." Nor ought it to pass unnoticed, that every attempt to prevent their spreading has hitherto had the contrary effect. For while those who oppose them, how ingenious and learned soever they be, are obliged to run into the grossest absurdities and inconsistencies, in their own defence, as one error leads on to another, it naturally tends to open the eyes of all candid men, who attend to the controversy. And may we not hope that so candid and ingenious a writer as Mr. Mather is represented to be, "who is not fond of his own judgment, or tenacious of his own practice, but stands ready to give them both up, when any one shall do him the friendly office of setting light before him," will, upon a calm review of all that has been said, become a friend to the good old way of our forefathers, the first settlers of New England, and come into that plan on which the New England churches were originally formed? Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THE

HALF-WAY COVENANT:

A

DIALOGUE.

AND LOOK THAT THOU MAKE THEM AFTER THEIR PATTERN, WHICH WAS SHOWED THEE IN THE MOUNT. *Jehovah.*

TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU; AND LO, I AM WITH YOU. *Jesus Christ.*

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A MINISTER AND HIS PARISHIONER,

CONCERNING THE

HALF-WAY COVENANT.

Parishioner. Sir, I am dissatisfied with a part of your public conduct, and am come to open my mind freely to you, if you will be so kind as to allow me an opportunity.

Minister. Sir, I am now at leisure, and at your service, and your honest frankness gives me pleasure. Between you and me alone, to let me know the objections you have against any part of my conduct, is to act a friendly part. It is more kind and Christian-like, than to keep your thoughts to yourself, to engender a secret disaffection in your heart; and you may be quite assured, that not only now, but in all future times, I shall with pleasure listen to any objections against my public administrations proposed in a friendly, candid manner; and will be ready to be set right, wherein I am wrong; or to let you know the reasons of my conduct. For, next to the light of God's countenance, and the approbation of my own conscience, I prize the good opinion of my fellow-men; and particularly, I greatly prize the testimony of the consciences of my own people in my behalf. To your conscience, therefore, I am now willing to approve myself. Open your mind without the least reserve.

P. I have lately moved into the parish. I had owned the covenant in the town I came from; my other children have been baptized; we have now another child for baptism, and I hear you refuse to baptize the children of any but those who are in full communion. This gives me pain.

M. I cannot give you pain, without feeling pain myself. But you would not desire that I should go counter to the will of my Lord and Master, while acting in his name, as his min-

ister; nor would this be a likely means to obtain a blessing for your child. And if I am warranted by the gospel of Christ to baptize your child, you are very sensible my reputation, and every worldly interest, will join to prompt me to it. You will easily make a convert of me to your opinion, if you can point out one text of Scripture to justify that common practice.

P. I have not studied the point. I cannot mention any texts of Scripture; but it is the custom where I was born and brought up; and I knew not but that it was the custom every where, until I moved into this parish.

M. No, sir, it is not the custom every where; it was not the custom where I was born and brought up; and there are many churches in the country that are not in the practice. At the first settling of New England, there was, so far as I know, not one church that allowed baptism to the children of any but those whose parents were, one or both, in full communion. About forty years after the first church was formed, this custom was brought in by a synod that met at Boston, 1662. Many ministers and churches zealously opposed it at the time, and even to this day the custom is not become universal; and of late a considerable number of churches, who had adopted the practice, have laid it aside. It is not practised at all in the church of Scotland, as I have been informed by a reverend gentleman of an established reputation, who has lately been invited, and who has removed from thence, to the presidency of New Jersey College. And it is certain the confession of faith, catechisms, and directory of the church of Scotland, make no mention of it; neither is the practice mentioned in the Saybrook platform, which has been generally received by the churches in Connecticut; for the council which met at Saybrook did not see cause to adopt that practice, although it had been introduced by the synod at Boston. But if you had not studied the point before you owned the covenant; and if you took it for granted, that it was right, merely from education; yet you are able to let me know in what views, and from what views, and from what motives you owned the covenant; as I suppose you meant to act conscientiously.

P. It was the common opinion that none ought to join in full communion, and come to the Lord's table, but those that were godly, that had on a wedding garment, lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink damnation to themselves. But it was thought that graceless persons might own the covenant, and have their children baptized; and this was my opinion, and I acted on these principles.

M. Yes, sir, and I suppose the generality of people in the

country that own the covenant, in these times, act on these principles. But it was not so from the beginning. The synod in 1662, who first brought in the practice, were not in this scheme. It was known and owned, and publicly declared on all hands, in the time of it, "that the synod did acknowledge, that there ought to be true saving faith in the parent, according to the judgment of rational charity, or else the child ought not to be baptized.*

P. But, sir, I am surprised! Is this true? Was this really the opinion of those who first brought in this practice?

M. It is true, it was indeed their opinion, if we may give credit to their own declarations. No man who was for this practice, perhaps, was of more note than the Rev. Dr. Increase Mather, of Boston, who was a member of the synod, and afterwards wrote in defence of this practice; and no author can in more express language declare his sentiments. These are his own words, in a pamphlet, entitled, "A Discourse concerning the Subject of Baptism, wherein the present Controversies that are agitated in the New England Churches, are from Scripture and Reason modestly inquired into." "In the fifth place, it may be alleged, that the persons in question either have, to the judgment of charity, a justifying faith, or not. If not, they, and consequently their children, are not baptizable. If they have, then they are forthwith admissible to the Lord's supper. Answer.

"I. I do readily acknowledge, that as it is only a justifying faith which giveth right to baptism before God, so it is the profession or visibility of this faith that giveth right thereunto before the church. Some have maintained that a dogmatical historical faith, or a faith of assent to the truth of the gospel, doth entitle to baptism; but the common Protestant doctrine against the Papists speaketh otherwise. Though a man should believe all that the Holy Scriptures say concerning God and Christ, yet, if he doth not consent with his heart, that this God shall be his God, and this Christ his Savior, he hath not right to baptism in the sight of God; or if he doth not profess such a consent, (which is implied in the proposition before us, when it is said concerning the persons in question, that they gave up themselves to the Lord,) he cannot justly claim baptism. In most churches in the world, men own the creed, (called the apostles',) before baptism. Now, therein they say, I believe in God, and not only I believe God, namely, with a faith of assent

* See a Defence of the Answer and Arguments of the Synod, etc., against the reply made by the Rev. Mr. John Davenport, Pastor of the Church at New Haven. Preface, p. 23, 24.

only in the understanding. Now, to believe in God, implieth a consent of the will, choosing this God for my God. And considering that in baptism there is a profession of repentance for past transgressions, and an engagement to walk in newness of life for time to come, (Mark i. 4. 2 Pet. i. 9;) and that it cometh in the room of circumcision, which was a seal of the righteousness of faith, (Rom. iv. 11;) and that thereby remission of sins is sealed, (Acts ii. 38;) which remission is not promised to any faith but justifying; also that baptism is said to save, (1 Pet. iii. 21;) and they that are baptized are said to be in Christ, (Gal. iii. 27,) and to have communion with Christ in respect of his death and resurrection, (Rom. vi. 4, 5. Col. ii. 12;) I say, from these and many the like considerations, I am fully persuaded that it is not a mere historical, but justifying faith, which giveth right to baptism."

These are his words, and they are as plain and express as could be desired.

P. But if this was in fact the case, I cannot conceive what room there was for the half-way covenant; for such persons might consistently profess to comply with the whole covenant, and not stop half way in practice, but come up to all ordinances.

M. You are right in this observation. Persons so qualified, who have been brought up under the light of the gospel from their infancy, by pious parents and godly ministers, and now adult, and become godly themselves, professing and practising accordingly, are, in a judgment of rational charity, as fit for the Lord's table, as to offer their children in baptism. Nor is it merely a privilege they may claim, to come to the Lord's supper along with their Christian brethren, and join with them in commemorating the death of Christ; but it is their indispensable duty. They are bound to do it by the express command of Christ, (Luke xxii. 19;) "This do in remembrance of me." And to neglect it is practically to renounce the authority of Jesus Christ. And is it right for ministers to teach the disciples of Christ to live in the breach of the least of his commands?

P. But what would Dr. Mather say to this?

M. You may hear, for these are his words: "It will not follow that these persons are immediately to be admitted to the Lord's table, or to the privileges of full communion; for more full and satisfactory evidences of regeneration and of Christian proficiency are requisite in order to admission to the Lord's table than in order to baptism." And if you will read Mather's Magnalia, you will see that they insisted on *initial grace* in order to baptism, but supposed greater attainments necessary in

order to the Lord's supper. But if that command of Christ is binding on weak Christians, who are indeed real Christians, (Luke xxii. 19,) to say they are not to be admitted to the Lord's table, is to say it is not lawful they should obey the command of Christ. So this half-way covenant, while it teaches for doctrine the commandment of men, sets aside the command of Christ.

P. I am in the same opinion; nor can I see any room for the half-way covenant on Mather's scheme. But I have heard that Stoddard's scheme favors the present practice.

M. This is a mistake. Mr. Stoddard, of Northampton, never practised the half way; that is, he never admitted any to have baptism for their children but those who were in full communion; and he expressly declares, that those who have been baptized in infancy, and owned their covenant, are obliged in duty to come to the Lord's table. Yea, he says, "It is a scandal if they do not, and the church may call them to an account for their neglect. It is a visible contempt cast upon the ordinance." He held the Lord's supper to be a converting ordinance, and that unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, might lawfully come. And that it was as lawful to come to the Lord's supper as to baptism; so that there was no room for any half-way covenant or half-way practice, on his scheme; for unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, may, on his scheme, come not only half way, but to all ordinances, and to one as well as to another.

P. I never heard of these things till now, and I know not what to think or what to say. It seems as if the half-way covenant and the half-way practice could not be made consistent on any scheme.

M. If the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man, he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the Lord's supper; yea, that command of Christ, in Luke xxii. 19, renders it his indispensable duty to attend the Lord's supper.* But if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it have, in the sight of God, no right to either of those ordi-

* Under the Jewish dispensation it was lawful for an Israelite, not hindered by any external impediment, voluntarily to absent himself from the passover, if he was ceremonially unclean. But under the gospel, an Israelite indeed, of sufficient age and understanding, and not hindered by any natural impediment, may not voluntarily absent himself from the Lord's supper, unless disqualified by spiritual uncleanness, by his own personal wickedness unrepented of, or for which he has not made gospel satisfaction. And such a one is equally unfit to offer his child in baptism. (Num. ix. 13. Matt. v. 23, 24.)

nances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other; no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha. Did you never hear it observed and talked of, that those who own the covenant, make as full and large a profession as they who join in full communion?

P. Yes. And my former minister read the same covenant to such as owned the covenant, as he did to those that joined in full communion, word for word, only one did not promise to come up to all ordinances, and the other did. And I must confess this sometimes stumbled me.

M. If you please, sir, I will repeat the covenant we use when any join in full communion, the same that was read to me by my minister, when I joined to the church about three and thirty years ago. A brief summary of it is this: "You do now, in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and men, in the sincerity of your soul, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your sovereign Lord and supreme Good, through Jesus Christ; and solemnly devote and give up yourself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory," etc. And is this more full and express than your former minister used when persons owned the covenant?

P. I think not; it is very much like it.

M. So far as I am acquainted, the forms in use all over the country, a very few instances excepted, are very much alike; the only difference of any consequence lies in practice. I think it my duty, in private as well as public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons understand it before they make it, and know what they are about to do, and are sufficiently instructed that it is a wicked thing to lie to God with their mouths, and flatter him with their lips.

P. Very well, sir; no doubt this is a minister's duty. But alas! for me, I never knew what I was about, nor considered the import of the words I publicly gave my consent unto. I knew myself to be unconverted. I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptized; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do; but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant was what the unconverted might do.

M. How can a man that knows himself to be unconverted, dead in sin, and destitute of the grace of God, stand up before the whole congregation, and say, "I do now, in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and

men, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be my sovereign Lord and supreme Good, through Jesus Christ, and solemnly devote and give up myself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory"?

P. I freely own I knew not what I did, when I owned the covenant. But you hinted just now, that this is not the custom in all the churches where the half-way practice takes place.

M. I have heard of a few churches where the ministers have of late drawn up a new form for those who own the covenant, essentially different from that which is used when any one is admitted to full communion; which new form designedly leaves out the covenant of grace, and contains a profession, which unconverted men may make, and yet speak true. And this, with greater propriety, may be called the half-way covenant, although indeed it does not go half way, and gives no right to those ordinances which are seals of the covenant of grace. Besides, God never did propose any covenant to mankind but which required real holiness on man's part; and any covenant short of this is a mere human device. It is teaching for doctrine the commandment of men, directly contrary to the express orders of Jesus Christ to his apostles, and all their successors. (Matt. xxviii. 20.) "Teaching them to observe whatsoever I command you." The covenant with Adam required perfect holiness, without any provision for pardon in case of transgression. The covenant at Sinai, written on the two tables of stone, called the tables of the covenant, containing ten commands, according to our Savior's interpretation, required them to love God with all their heart, and their neighbor as themselves, in which the sum of all virtue consists, (Matt. xxii. 37—40;) but, however, it made provision for pardon to the true penitent, through shedding of blood, but not for impenitent sinners. (Lev. xxvi. 1 Kings viii.) And it is acknowledged on all hands, Antinomians excepted, that repentance toward God, and faith toward Christ, are required in the covenant of grace, as revealed in the gospel. These ungracious covenants, therefore, are not from heaven, but of men.

P. My conscience is convinced. I am obliged to give up the half-way covenant; but it is with no small reluctance; for what will become of my child? must it remain unbaptized? I cannot bear the thought. What shall I do?

M. Is it lawful for a minister of Christ to baptize any one without a divine warrant?

P. No.

M. Is baptism, administered without a divine warrant, a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No. But where is your c
what is the tenor of it?

M. In Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Go
creature." Thus unlimited is the
gospel. "And he that believeth and
The faith which entitles to baptism
ingly, when the multitude were p
day of Pentecost, Peter did not say,
he say, Join in full communion; but,
be baptized in the name of the Lord
sins. (Acts ii. 38.) And with the
divine commission, Philip said to th
est with all thine heart, thou mayest.'
on all hands, that if parents have no
selves, their children can have no rig

P. Is it lawful for me to join in
know I have no grace? Can I answ

M. You remember, when the K
guests, he saw a man among them
garment, to whom he said, "Friend, h
not having on a wedding garment?
To make a false and lying professio
ness. It is true, there will be tares a
it is the devil sows them there, and n
false brethren come into the church,
they have no right to be there.

P. But does not my own baptism r
ber, and entitle my child to baptism,
of faith and repentance?

M. "Circumcision verily profiteth
but if thou be a breaker of the law, t
uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew
neither is that circumcision which is
(Rom. ii. 25, 28.) One baptized in i
of God practically renounces his bapt
who reject Christ and continue impeni
God as entitled to the blessings of th
under the curse of the law. "He th
demned already, and the wrath of
(John iii. 19, 36.) And what right h
of the covenant of grace, in the sight
himself declared to be under condemna

P. Well, if I have no right to bap
must be silent. But I wish it might b

M. Will you allow me to examin
baptism which you express?

P. I ought to be willing. I ought to know the motives that influence me; for God knows them, whether I do or not.

M. I am glad to see your mind so serious and candid. If this temper should continue, I should hope all your doubts would be removed; for I can tell you seriously, I am willing to baptize your child, provided you do understandingly and with all your heart desire it.

P. And do I not? I should be a cruel parent if I did not.

M. Baptism, you know, is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In baptism, therefore, you dedicate your child to God the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and so give up your child with all your heart to the Lord forever to be educated for God, and to be for him, and for him alone, in time and to eternity. And do you love God to that degree, as thus to give him your child forever? if so, why do not you give yourself to God, first of all? You love your child, but you love yourself better. First of all, then, cease to be cruel to your own soul; no longer practically renounce your own baptism, by turning your back on God and the Redeemer; but act up to its genuine import; give yourself to God, through Jesus Christ his Son, that you may become the temple of the Holy Ghost, and thus ratify what your parents did for you, when they dedicated you to God in baptism. This is that owning of the baptismal covenant which God requires at your hands. Then bring your dear child, and consecrate it to God in sincerity and truth. This is the way, the right way for a blessing. But if, instead of this, you are moved only by custom, by a sense of worldly honor, by pride and shame; and desire that holy ordinance to be administered to your child from unholy motives, as Simon Magus desired the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to answer his carnal ends, God knows it, and all the world will know it at the day of judgment. Pray, how was it when your other children were baptized? and how is it in general, to all appearance, when people own the covenant, and get their children baptized? Are they brought up for God, or only to serve divers lusts and pleasures? Look through the country wherever you are acquainted: the youth learn to dress, to sing, to dance; but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God? and is this evidently their great concern, to bring them up for God? But to leave others, and to attend only to your own heart; can it be true, that you have a heart to give your child to God, and yet not a heart to give yourself to him? Think of it, my dear sir.

P. I must grant that it is absurd and inconsistent, for a

parent to pretend to have a heart to give his child to God, and yet have no heart to give himself to him. But I do desire to give myself to God.

M. Pray, sir, what then hinders you from giving yourself to him? You may desire to escape everlasting misery, you may desire to be happy forever; so Balaam did. Self-love may excite to this, where there is no love to God in the heart; but if you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; you may have your choice: you may do as you like: "come, for all things are now ready." And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing, therefore, can hinder the baptism of your child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant.

P. Shocking affair! My child unbaptized! None to blame but its own parents! What shall I do?

M. Is not God your Creator? Are you not his by an original, absolute, entire right? Is he not infinitely worthy of your supreme love? Were you not in your infancy dedicated to him in baptism? and have you turned your back upon him to this very hour, and practically renounced your baptism in his sight? so that, dying in this state, your baptism will be of no advantage to you; you will perish among the uncircumcised, among the unbaptized, among pagans; as it is written, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and do you now inquire what you shall do? Ah, my dear sir, the answer is plain. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and thus at last comply with the import of your baptism, and become a disciple of Christ. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" (Ps. l. 16.) Pray accept kindly this advice from one who is your friend, and who is bound by office to act an honest part with the souls committed to his charge.

P. I thank you, sir, for your fidelity, and ask your prayers. For the present, adieu.

M. I thank you for your kind visit. I ask the favor of another hour, when you are at leisure. I am always at your service; and might I be a means of your salvation, it would give me joy, while I live, and after I am dead, through eternal

ages. I only add, if you will read what the late learned, pious President Edwards wrote on the qualifications for Christian communion, printed at Boston, and the Rev. Mr. Green's pieces on the same subject, printed at New York, you may in them see the truth confirmed, and objections answered more largely; and if, after all, you should desire further conversation on this subject, I will be ready to attend whenever you will be so kind as to call upon me; only come at all times, as you have at this, in a serious, friendly, candid spirit; remembering this is one of the most interesting, solemn, and important subjects. Adieu, my dear sir.

DIALOGUE II.

WITHOUT HOLINESS, NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD. — *Paul.*

WHOSOEVER SHALL DENY ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I ALSO DENY BEFORE MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. — *Jesus Christ.*

Parishioner. Reverend sir, as you asked the favor of another hour, when I should be at leisure, I am now come to pay you a second visit, to let you know my sentiments plainly, and hope you will treat me with all the calmness and kindness you professed before.

Minister. I am ready to hear every thing you have to say.

P. I freely confess you made me say, and consent to every thing you chose I should say; and now I choose to turn the tables. And if you will be as condescending to me as I was to you, I doubt not but I shall easily gain my point.

M. I mean to be condescending.

P. You intimate there is no text of Scripture to justify the practice of those having children baptized, who do not come to the Lord's supper. Allow there is none, it does not in the least prove the point. I will as easily be a proselyte to your opinion, if you will point me a text of Scripture which saith that all who were baptized, or had their children baptized, came to the Lord's supper.

M. There are many things may be gathered from revelation, which are not expressed in terms.

P. Very true; and I think equally on my side of the question as on yours. I remember you intimated before, that it was not the custom any where, at the first settling this country, to baptize the children of any, only those who come to the Lord's table; and that it is not to this day the practice of the church

of Scotland; which I find is a mistake, as I am informed, upon good authority, that the church of Scotland ever did, and do to this day, baptize for those who do not come to the table, and am well knowing to the practice of the presbyteries in this country, that they actually do baptize for those who do not come to the table of the Lord.

M. Allow this to be so, it does not prove there is any half-way covenant.

P. It is readily allowed, and I believe generally, if not universally agreed, that there is no half-way covenant; Dr. Mather never supposed a half-way covenant. And I freely allow it is the duty of all to come to the Lord's table, whom the church will accept. But to oblige persons to that which we cannot convince them they may safely do, seems hard, and contrary to that Christian spirit which the gospel urgeth. (Rom. xv. 1.) We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. (Gal. vi. 2.) Bear ye one another's burdens.

M. The gospel every where urgeth condescension. But persons who, in a judgment of charity, are pious, are obliged by the express command of Christ. (Luke xxii. 19.) "This do in remembrance of me."

P. I cannot believe the command of Christ obligeth any of his followers to do that which they in their consciences dare not attempt, under their then present circumstances. I believe it is their duty to come, but I believe they must first get their scruples removed; and I believe the church must allow them that privilege, which if they will not, in order to be consistent with themselves, they must proceed to excommunication; and I cannot see why the church must not proceed further, and excommunicate all baptized persons who neglect to come to the Lord's table; for they are all visible members of the church. A sad consequence, if it cannot be prevented.

M. To drive the point will undoubtedly make sad work; but it will not do to tell persons they will be accepted of God if they be not gracious; neither will it do for us to lead them to make a lying profession; nothing short of a gracious profession will give a person a right to the ordinances of the gospel.

P. Sir, I allow what you say in part, and I do not know that any one pretends to the contrary; all are agreed in it, that no person ever can be accepted of God, and be finally happy, short of real holiness; but whoever thought, unless it be some wild enthusiast, that a person might not be exhorted to attempt to do his duty, unless he could do it perfectly? It seems the sentiments you advance amount to the same absurdity lately

taught by a foreigner, that none but those who are gracious are to be urged to do any duty. And with regard to a lying profession, it seems your sentiments lead persons to it. For, according to you, those who make profession of real piety, have a right to the ordinance of God; and those whom the church receive on this foot are really in covenant. So it is not grace which gives the right, but a profession; then, if that profession is a false one, and the person who makes it is a hypocrite, a false profession, even a lie, brings a person really into covenant with God, and gives him a right to his ordinances. If I understand you, there cannot be any profession, only a lying one, unless persons are gracious. So a lying profession does bring persons visibly into covenant with God, or none are visibly in covenant with God, only those who are gracious. This I think is contrary to the divine declaration, and to all the divine conduct towards his covenant people. God allowed them to enter into covenant; God treated them as being in covenant; and declared they were in covenant, and accordingly had compassion on them, offered them special privileges and glorious means, that they might be trained up for his heavenly kingdom.

M. There seem to be some difficulties which I had not thought of; but is it not the covenant of grace which is to be owned?

P. Doubtless it is; no one dare deny it. Neither need they be led to give their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; but by attending upon God's ordinances, they mean to confirm their belief of the truth of the covenant of grace, laying themselves under more solemn obligations to perform every duty.

M. I think it my duty in private, as well as in public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons understand it before they make it, and to instruct them what a wicked thing it is to lie to God.

P. Very well, sir: no doubt it is a minister's duty; and equally upon my principles as on yours. I think it the duty of ministers to teach and instruct persons, and show them how duty is to be performed; but not teach them to neglect duty, if they cannot do it in a perfect manner. Men are nowhere in the Bible forbid to enter into covenant, nor to be baptized, nor to attend the Lord's supper, nor to do any other duty, unless under some special circumstances; but abundantly required to do in a right manner every duty, the one as well as the other. But no special qualification is required of men to attempt to do duty, more under the New Testament than under the Old. All the congregation of Israel were required, except under

particular uncleanness; and I cannot find any thing to the contrary under the New Testament. The Pharisees and lawyers were blamed for rejecting the counsel of God, they not being baptized, (Luke vii. 30.) If it is the duty of all to be baptized, and to attend the Lord's supper, then it is the duty of ministers and churches to receive all those who visibly are qualified.

M. God never proposed any covenant to mankind, but what required real holiness on man's part. The covenant of grace requires repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

P. The covenant of grace requires real holiness, on man's part, for eternal salvation. Repentance and faith are absolutely necessary for salvation. But faith and repentance are not absolutely necessary to give persons a right to attend the means of grace; for those who have not true faith are called upon to attend the means of grace. Though the objection may be made, that wicked men's prayers are abomination unto God, yet it is their duty to pray, as God commands all men. The Pharisees were blamed for praying in the streets, that they might have glory from men. But they were not blamed for praying; for ungodly men are blamed for not praying. (Ps. xiv. 4; Isai. xliii. 22.) So men are blamed for leaving off praying, (Job xxvii. 10;) hence it is their duty to pray under their circumstances. Real holiness is required on man's part for salvation; but whether real holiness is required in order to enter into covenant, is another thing. God declares (Lev. xxviii.) "that he would punish Israel because they had despised his judgments, and because their soul abhorred his statutes, (v. 44;) and yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God." Now I do not see, if persons may not enter into covenant only on the plan of being holy, why they must not be cast out on the plan of their being unholy; which is not done, as declared above, and in many other places. But God does really allow unregenerate men to be in covenant, and treats them as being in covenant, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15;) and the Lord God of their fathers sent them his messengers, rising up by times and sending them; because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling-place. God does not declare the covenant void, but rather he will keep covenant to a thousand generations. If men were not in covenant, they could not be cast out. But they really are in covenant, though unregenerate. For my own part, I freely confess I cannot find that the

Scriptures represent real holiness absolutely necessary, visibly to enter into covenant, and attend God's ordinances. I know many texts are mentioned; 2 Chron. xv. 15, is one: "And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about." Who can once suppose that this was done in a gracious manner by all the thousands of Judah, and Benjamin, and some of the other tribes? Let us hear the covenant, and the truth will appear. Ver. 12, 13: "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul, that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman." Israel were fallen into idolatry, and Asa was reforming them. And they were required really to turn from the service of idols to the service of the living God; and this is what is required in the external covenant, namely, to break off from sin, and turn to God. Another text is that, Acts viii. 37: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest;" by which, from the context, there cannot be any more consistently understood than his belief, that Jesus was the Christ the prophet had foretold, and that baptism was the way in which we are now to be visibly introduced into covenant with God. If the eunuch was a good man, it does not appear that Philip acted upon the plan to receive only good men, or that he could act upon the plan. Having no rule to determine by, we infer that what Philip acted upon was the eunuch's giving his full assent that Jesus was the Christ.

M. We do not mean to act upon the plan of *knowing* whether men are gracious or not.

P. I cannot say what you mean; but what you say seems to imply it; if you mean they should make no higher profession than we do, why do you tell them they have no right unless they are gracious? We require persons to make profession of their belief of the Christian religion, their assent to the glorious doctrines, acknowledging their obligations, determining to be faithful according to them; upon which profession you will receive them, if they will tell you they believe they are gracious. I cannot find any such rule. I wish they were all gracious, and that we had good evidence to believe they were.

M. Is baptism administered without a divine warrant a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No, sir; nor with neither, only as it brings a child visibly into covenant with God, and so puts it into the way of covenant mercies; unless you hold it to be regeneration.

M. But you remember the commission?

P. Yes, sir; but I think you have not rightly represented it. The commission at large is, (Matt. xxvii. 19,) "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus unlimited was their commission to teach and baptize. That in Mark xvi. doubtless means the same thing. Ministers are to instruct persons in the Christian religion, and to baptize them. But you do not consider baptism as included in the commission, "Go preach the gospel to every creature." You say, thus unlimited is the commission to preach the gospel. "And he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." You say, the faith which entitles to baptism is a saving faith. It is quite beyond me how you get this consequence. I imagine you may as easily get another, namely, that baptism is saving. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." It is here declared that true faith is absolutely necessary for salvation, but baptism is not. Persons who are never baptized may be saved. The faith here, that Christ speaks of, is not that merely which entitles to baptism, but that which entitles to eternal life, which is clear by the opposite. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The text does not say, He that believeth not, and is not baptized, shall be damned; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

M. You remember, when the king came in to see the guests, how he treated the man who had not on a wedding garment.

P. Yes, sir; and readily allow that God will act as the Searcher of hearts, at the great day of judgment, and will punish every one who is not found having on the righteousness of Christ.

M. Do look through the country, and observe the conduct of those in the present practice of owning the covenant, and getting their children baptized. Are they brought up for God? The youth learn to dress, to sing, and dance; but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God?

P. Verily, sad and awful is the case, dreadful the neglect; and parents will have an awful account to give. But, pray, sir, can you give me any better account, where churches have practised on the other plan? Hath it appeared that parents have been more faithful to bring up their children for God? and hath it had any better effect? If it hath, it is an argument in your favor; if not, the contrary; it must be an argument against you. Instance the parishes: we may appeal to all who have been acquainted, whether parents have not apparently taken, at least

as great pains to instruct and educate their children; and that as many at least have been trained up for God, under the former practice, as under the present. What great benefit, then, upon your plan? Surely none. But suffer me to mention one disadvantage; the peace of the church is greatly disturbed, which seems to be the chief effect of warm controversies; therefore I wish you gentlemen ministers would treat the subject calmly, if you cannot be persuaded to neglect the controversy; for I tremble to think of the awful consequences, and pray God to prevent them, by leading his churches into the way of all truth. I confess my difficulties are rather increased than diminished, and must think the present practice, well attended to, will be most for the general good. I know some difficulties may be proposed in either practice; but I think contention is best to be left off before it be meddled with, and hope you will join issue with me to drop the affair, as I have no design of engaging in the controversy. In the mean time, I earnestly wish to see men truly concerned about the great things of another world, to see ministers and churches joining harmoniously, to spread far and wide the honors of the Lamb that was slain, but is alive forever more, that God may be glorified, the churches have peace, and be edified. Adieu, dear sir.

A PARISHIONER.

POSTSCRIPT.

P. Sir: If I mistake not, you represent it to be a new thing to allow baptism to the children of any but those whose parents, one or both, were in full communion, brought in forty years after the first church was formed, by the synod met at Boston, in the year 1662. The Rev. Dr. Increase Mather gives us a very different account in the book you quoted. He mentions the opinion of many of the most pious and godly ministers who came over into this country at the first settling of New England. Mr. Cotton, Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Stone, who came in the same vessel in the year 1633, all freely give their opinion, that children, whose parents are baptized, have a right to baptism, who are in covenant until they are cast out. Mr. Cotton, minister of the first church in Boston, says, in a letter dated in the year 1634, (which was before 1662,) we may not account such parents for pagans and infidels, who are themselves baptized, and profess their belief of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and live without notorious scandalous crimes, though they give not clear evidence of their regenerate state.

In the year 1635 came over Mather, Norton, and Shepherd, three extraordinary men; each give their opinion in the affirmative. In the year 1636 came Patrick and Rogers, Mr. Smith of Weathersfield, Mr. Prudden of Milford, and many others, all in the affirmative. So the Congregationalists at home, Dr. Owen, Dr. Holmes, and others. From which it appears, that it was no new thing for persons in covenant to have their children baptized, if they did not come to the table; and I think many of their arguments unanswerable. P.

DIALOGUE III.

Parishioner. Sir, this third visit I am come to make you, for I have lately read a piece printed at New London, entitled, "A Dialogue between a Minister and his Parishioner, concerning the Half-way Covenant, continued;" said to be written by one of the most learned and ingenious ministers in the colony. I hope, therefore, now, if ever, by the assistance of such a patron, to be able to carry my point. Instructed by him, I give up the half-way covenant; I grant there is but one covenant. I give up the half-way practice too, as founded only in ignorance, and the mistaken notions of the vulgar. I am convinced, that he that is qualified to have his children baptized, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table. I come therefore to claim baptism for my child, and a place at the Lord's table for myself, as my proper right. However, I am not well pleased at the publication of our discourse in my first visit, although I must confess you have given a fair representation of what passed, because, being very dull at that time, I make but a very indifferent figure in the eyes of the public.

Minister. Be comforted, my friend; no blame is laid on you by the public. I bear it all; and I am willing to bear it for your good; and methinks you have only cause of joy and thankfulness; for to be convinced so soon of your mistake, is no small favor. No doubt the voice of the clergy, who practise the half way, declaring, as one man, that he who is qualified to offer his child to baptism, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table, has wrought your conviction; for your former faith and practice were grounded merely on the custom of the country; this led you to think that the Lord's supper was more holy than baptism. But while you hear all the ministers, with whom you converse, declare they mean no such thing, they

practise the half way only in condescension to the ignorance and groundless unscriptural scruples of the common people, you are convinced; you give up the point; you own the command of Christ, "Do this in remembrance of me," is binding on all his disciples; but, pray, upon what grounds do you now so boldly claim baptism for your child?

P. Although I was "uncommonly dull and muddy" in my first visit, yet, you know, sir, what I wanted was to have my child baptized. As you told me there was but one covenant, so we were agreed that I had entered into that covenant, the very same covenant that you entered into three-and-thirty years ago, when you was admitted into the church. And, sir, why may I not have the seal of it set upon my child?

M. Did not I expressly tell you, that, "if the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man; he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the Lord's supper? but that, if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it have in the sight of God no right to either of those ordinances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other; no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha"?

P. True, you did so; and there is but one covenant, says my patron.

M. This covenant, then, is the covenant of grace, which, we are all agreed, requires repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; or else there is no covenant of grace at all; for he says there is but one. But lay your hand upon your heart, and tell me the truth honestly: did you mean to profess repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, when you owned the covenant? or, in other words, did you mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace? Pray, sir, recollect and repeat the very words you spake to me in your first visit.

P. You make me blush; for I told you the truth in my first visit, from the bottom of my heart; and this is what I said: I "knew myself to be unconverted; I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptized; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do, but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant was what the unconverted might do." These were my very words; and on these principles I acted, as do all others that I am acquainted with, who own the covenant, have

their children baptized and do not come to the Lord's table; and I verily thought this was right before my first visit.

M. How is it possible a man so honest as you then appeared to be, should now act such a dishonest part as you have done? It is my duty, as a minister of Christ, to rebuke you sharply; for then you told me, as you now own, that you did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, upon which I denied baptism to your child; and yet just now you pretended you did mean to do it. You have need to blush; this deliberate dissimulation in such an affair, is no small crime. Did your learned patron advise you to this step to get your child baptized? Is this the way to obtain God's blessing?

P. Be this as it may, I am willing now to make a profession, and publicly to enter into covenant with God, and I have no objection against the form used in your church. I can make that covenant, and speak truly in the sight of God, notwithstanding I know I have no grace.

M. How can a man who knows he has no grace profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?

P. I do not mean to make a profession that shall imply conversion. There would be "special hypocrisy" in doing so.

M. What then? Do you suppose the unconverted do comply with the covenant of grace? that the unconverted have repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? that the unconverted choose the Lord Jehovah for their sovereign Lord and supreme good through Jesus Christ, and give up themselves to his service, to walk in all his ways, seeking his glory?

P. No, sir, by no means. But "if it be true that the Lord Jehovah is my sovereign Lord and supreme good through Jesus Christ, that is, if it be true that he who through Christ is the author of being, and of every mercy to all the living, is the sovereign Lord and supreme good of every living soul, it is no harm to avouch it." I mean to give my assent to this truth, and no more.

M. Doth not the devil believe the truth of this proposition as firmly as any wicked man does? and is he in covenant? You have need to be better instructed about the nature of entering into covenant with God, before you can be considered as qualified in point of doctrinal knowledge.

P. No, sir, I am not so ignorant, neither. I know in what sense you mean to understand your covenant. But knowing myself to be unconverted, I cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace in that sense. I cannot profess supreme love to God, and that I do actually take him as my God, my chief good, through Jesus Christ. This is not in my heart.

Therefore I mean to adopt the words of the covenant in a different sense; even in the sense in which an unconverted man, who is at enmity against God, may use them, and yet speak true.

M. But this is not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace. And therefore should you make it, it could give you no right to sealing ordinances for yourself or your child. Rather is it gross and scandalous dissimulation, very much like what is practised by Arians and Socinians among the clergy of the church of England, when they subscribe the thirty-nine articles, in order to qualify themselves for a benefice upon the establishment; which practice is condemned by all honest men.

P. Be this as it may, I can, at least, with moral sincerity, promise "to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands, seeking his glory."

M. The obedience engaged by one who professes a compliance with the covenant of grace, is that kind of obedience which the covenant requires, namely, a holy obedience, an obedience which proceeds from faith and love. And do you mean to engage this?

P. No, by no means. I only mean to engage what an unconverted man may do, while such.*

M. But this unholy obedience is not that kind of obedience which the covenant of grace requires at your hands. So that you mean to profess neither to comply with the covenant of grace at present, nor to live such a holy life as it requires for the future. In short, you mean to use the words of a saint, with the heart of a hypocrite; and so to come into Christ's

* Other writers maintain, that such as know themselves to be unconverted, when they join in full communion with the church, are to engage that very kind of obedience required in the covenant of grace, from that time and forward till they die. They are not to profess that they have as yet loved God, believed in Christ, repented of their sins, or lived holy lives; but they are to engage that they will do all this as soon as ever they have joined with the church, and from that time forward till they die. This is Mr. Beckwith's scheme, in his answer to Mr. Green. If these professors are so near being converted in their own judgments, really and honestly, that they do expect to be actually converted as soon as they have joined with the church, it is a pity they do not put off their public profession till the next Sabbath; and so be converted first: and then they might make a full profession of a present compliance with the covenant of grace, and so the whole controversy might be ended. This is always the way that honest people take when they enter into the marriage covenant, to which this writer compares this transaction. They do not come and present themselves before the priest, to enter into the marriage covenant, till they begin to love each other. And now they can with a good conscience give their consent to the whole marriage covenant, as being conscious to themselves that they already have such a heart in them. But should a pair offer to be married who had, through their whole courtship, and to that moment, been at enmity against each other, as much as Paul declares every carnal mind to be against God, (Rom. viii. 7,) it would be looked upon as a hypocritical, mad, and stupid piece of conduct.

visible church with the language of a friend, but with the heart of an enemy. Your proposed conduct may serve to give a very true and just exposition to those words of our Savior, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" As if he had said, "I call you friend, because you, in words, make the same profession which my real friends do. But why do you do this, when at the same time you have the heart of an enemy? Why do you act this hypocritical part? Such dissimulation is special hypocrisy." If you could not comply with our covenant in its plain sense, and in the sense you knew we understood it, why did not you rather come like an honest man, and say so, and desire to have it laid aside, and a new covenant, an ungracious covenant, introduced in its room; a covenant which you could make, and act an honest part?

P. I thought there was but one covenant. I supposed the covenant you use in your church, as you understand it, was that one covenant. I thought that baptism and the Lord's supper were seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other. And so I must profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, or I cannot be received among Christ's disciples, or claim the privileges of such; therefore I put this new sense on the words, that I might consent to them with a good conscience.

M. But the words, in this new sense, are not the covenant of grace, but an ungracious covenant; in sense and meaning exactly like the half-way covenant, in use in some churches, where they have two covenants, (a number of such churches I could name to you;) so while you cry out against the name of a half covenant, you take the covenant of grace, and turn it into the very thing, in order to bring it down to a level with your graceless heart; and then put on a bold face, and come and claim the privileges peculiar to those who profess a compliance with the covenant of grace itself.

P. Sir, "I am persuaded God has made the Lord's supper a converting ordinance to many, and he may make it so to me."

M. And, O my friend, will you dissemble in this shocking manner, in order to get into the church, that you may come to the Lord's table, and be converted? Is this what you mean by moral sincerity? I tell you with that plainness that becomes my office, that to come thus is not the way for a blessing, but for a curse. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, instead of being in the way of a blessing, exposes himself to the righteous judgment of God; agreeable to the apostle's words to the Corinthians.

P. Nay, sir, the Corinthians "turned the Lord's supper into a feast of Bacchus." And what is this to me?

M. Is not deliberate, designed dissimulation, in the most solemn, religious transaction on earth, — even in covenanting with the great God, — as bad as drunkenness?

P. Nay, sir, but I am expressly commanded to come to the Lord's supper, by Christ himself.

M. This command was given to none but Christ's disciples, and in the apostolic age none ever pretended to attend the Lord's supper, but those who had made a profession, and were admitted into the Christian church. As yet you have not made a profession, to be sure, not such a profession as God ever required; nor is the profession you now propose to make, a profession of a compliance with God's covenant, even with the covenant of grace.

P. "I am able to demonstrate, as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid, that if an unconverted man may not avouch the Lord for his God, nor resolve to obey him, he may not say, Our Father, which art in heaven; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." And it is damnable heresy to teach that the unconverted ought not to pray. And if they sin in praying, yet it is less sin to pray than not to pray.

M. It is a greater sin to lie than to do nothing. Lying is not a means of grace. Lying is not an appointed means of conversion. There are many things unconverted sinners may say to God, and speak true. To speak the truth to God is well, (Jam. ii. 19;) but to say that which they know is not true, is a thousand times worse than to say nothing. (Matt. xxiii. 14. Acts v. 3.) And for a man who is sensible that it is not in his heart to forgive those who have trespassed against him, and that in fact he does not forgive them, to come into the presence of God, and pray, saying, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," is implicitly to ask God not to forgive him; but this is a greater sin than not to pray at all, as all will allow; and it will hold true, as true as any "theorem in Euclid," that lying is worse than nothing, in praying, in covenanting, and in every thing else.

P. Sir, on your plan, three quarters of the Christian world will be shut out of the church.

M. Were it not better, were it not more for the honor of Christ and Christianity, in the sight of pagans, Jews, and Mahometans, and in the sight of the ungodly in Christian countries, and more for the good of their own souls, that nine tenths should be shut out of the church, if need so require, than to come in by wilful lying? But for a man to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he knows he has no grace, is no better; and yet without such a profession no man

can visibly enter into covenant with God. For God has no other covenant extant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals; for there is but one covenant, as you allow; and to use the words of this covenant in such a sense as to make it a graceless half covenant, gives no more right to sealing ordinances, than to repeat any chapter in the Apocrypha.

P. If your scheme "should prevail, it would bring back the country into the ancient state of heathenism." *

M. And pray, sir, who do you think will have the hottest hell, a heathen who dares not lie, or a Christian who allows himself to lie in the most solemn religious transactions? Or which will be the likeliest to be converted by the preaching of the gospel?

P. "When men of sense and conscience find themselves denied the enjoyment of ordinances for themselves and children in our churches," they will turn to the church of England.*

M. No man of sense or conscience will desire to make a lying profession, to get his children baptized; he would rather they never should be baptized than do such a wicked deed; and we stand ready to baptize the children of all, who can, understandingly and honestly, make that profession which God requires.

P. "Christ's visible kingdom requires in its members qualifications like itself, namely, those that are visible and knowable."

M. And we, in receiving them, act entirely on what is visible, namely, on their public profession, attended with an answerable conversation, just as they did in the apostolic age.

P. "Every baptized person is a member of Christ's visible church; but I was baptized in my infancy, therefore I have a right to all the external privileges of a church member."

M. You remember the answer I gave to this at your second visit, namely, "Baptism alone, in the apostolic age, never made any adult person a church member without a profession; profession was first made, and then they were baptized. Those therefore that are baptized in infancy, in order to be members in this sense, must make a profession when they become adult. The New England churches, therefore, are right in demanding it."

P. You must then have a half covenant for these half members.

M. No, by no means. They are bound by their parents' act and deed to comply with the covenant of grace itself, as soon as they become adult. With this covenant, and with this alone, do we urge them to comply. Whenever they appear to

* Mr. Beckwith.

do it, we receive them to full communion; but if they openly renounce the God of their fathers, and obstinately persist in it, they must be considered and treated as persons who have visibly renounced their baptism, in which their parents devoted them to God through Jesus Christ, to be forever his.

P. "It is certain that the gospel contains no rule whereby to determine with any certainty that a man is gracious;" and therefore your scheme cannot be acted upon.

M. It is equally certain the gospel contains no rule to determine with certainty that men are orthodox, or sound in the faith. They may make an orthodox profession, but we cannot be certain that they mean as they say. To be sure, if they allow themselves to use orthodox words in a heterodox sense, as you do in the business of covenanting; and the truth is, let the qualifications be what you please, it is not necessary the church should have a certainty that the candidates for admission to sealing ordinances, have them really and in the sight of God. It is sufficient, on every scheme, that they appear to have them, to a judgment of charity, regulated by the word of God.

P. Such inconsistency may by no means be charged on the Deity, as to institute an ordinance with a design that never can be carried into execution; as is the case, if Christ has not given some infallible criterion, or mark, whereby to know who may be admitted.

M. Very well, sir, be pleased to take the inconsistence to yourself, until you can be infallibly certain that the candidate for admission is really orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as searcher of hearts. And in order to this, you will need the aid of that enthusiastical sort of people of whom your minister speaks; for it cannot be known, without an immediate revelation. You must get their spirit to come and tell you, whether men are as orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as they profess to be before men; for there is no infallible mark whereby you can certainly know it. An immediate revelation is absolutely necessary for this, "as I am able to demonstrate as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid."

P. Be this as it may; whether the church must be certain or not; yet we ourselves must be certain, that we have the necessary qualifications, or we must not come.

M. We are naturally as conscious of volitions as of speculations, of love as of belief, whenever we look into our own hearts, as all will allow. A man whose mind is wavering between Arminianism and Calvinism, inclining sometimes to one side from the corrupt bias of his heart, and sometimes to the other by the force of evidence, may not be able to say

which he believes. So a man whose mind is wavering between God and Mammon, inclining sometimes to one master with a view to his future interest, and sometimes to the other from an attachment to his present, may not be able to say, which master upon the whole he chooses; for the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. But Christ does not desire men to make a profession of being his disciples till they have sat down and counted the cost, and are come to a settled determination; as is plain from Luke xiv. 25—33. And when men are come to that settled determination, which our Savior there describes, they may say that they have come to it. And this is all the profession which we desire.

P. Thus far I have acted the part of a disputant, and I have now done. Suffer me therefore once more to reassume that honest character which I sustained in my first visit; for let others say what they will, I design to act an honest part. Now the truth of the case is this: I am not specially concerned to know by what rule the church must be governed in admitting members, neither am I concerned to know what they must do who are in doubt about themselves; the only question about which I am exercised, relates to my own particular case. I know I have no grace. I know I am unconverted. I told you so at first, and so I have told all the ministers with whom I have conversed; and how any man, that knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, and speak true, I could not understand, years ago. It was this that induced me to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and not to join in full communion, that so I might have my children baptized. Not one of the ministers with whom I have conversed, appears to justify the principles upon which I acted; but all as one man say, there is but one covenant, and this one covenant is the covenant of grace; indeed, they explain away the covenant of grace, till they bring it down into a graceless covenant, and then tell me I can comply with that, and ought to do so, and thus join in full communion. But you have fully convinced me of the inconsistence and absurdity of this; and yet I would beg leave to inquire, why might not the covenant of grace be voted out by the church, and a graceless covenant be substituted in its room? and then such as I am could consistently profess a compliance with such a covenant, and have baptism for their children.

M. But if a church should vote out the covenant of grace, or, which is the same thing, in other words, should vote out Christianity, how could it any longer be considered as a visible church of Christ, or as having a visible right to the visible seals

of God's covenant? And besides, should you bind your child to one of your neighbors, to learn some mechanic art, why, in this case, might not the covenant be sealed, ratified, and confirmed by the administration of baptism, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

P. The proposal shocks my mind. It would be a profanation of God's holy ordinance, to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, and put it to man's covenant.

M. But this ungracious covenant is man's covenant, and not God's. And to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, even to the covenant of grace, and apply it to a covenant which God never made, to a covenant made by men, is to profane the holy ordinance: and knowingly to profane God's holy ordinance, is not a duty, nor is this to put ourselves in the way of a blessing.

P. What need is there of any covenant at all?

M. It is not the manner of men to put a seal to a clean piece of paper. Nor did God ever appoint seals to be put to a blank. God's seals were appointed to be put to God's covenant; and we have no right to put them to a blank; and besides, it would be to give up the import of the actions, and to render sealing ordinances unmeaning, empty, useless ceremonies.

P. What shall I do?

M. Repent and believe the gospel. Thus preached John the Baptist: thus preached Jesus Christ; and thus his apostles. And therefore, being emboldened by their examples, I say unto you, "Enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

P. I thank you, sir, for your kind and friendly instructions. I ask your prayers. I must go.

M. I will detain you but a minute longer. You remember your former minister, the author of the second Dialogue concerning the half-way covenant, said, "There is no half-way covenant. Doubtless it is the covenant of grace. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; no one dare deny it." And your present patron says much the same. You remember, also, that in your second visit I told you that to say this, was implicitly to "yield up every point for which we contend;" and, in this view, I added, "nor do I doubt, if this controversy should go on, it will soon appear, that there is one who dares deny it; for otherwise all men of sense will see, that gentlemen on that side of the question are grossly inconsistent with themselves." And now it hath come to

pass, that one of the most discerning gentlemen on that side of the question, has published a labored piece, to prove that in order to enjoy sealing ordinances for ourselves and our children, we are not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, but only with a graceless covenant. This, therefore, is the only point that needs to be settled in order to settle the whole controversy; to this point, therefore, I advise you to give a most serious attention. For, if it can be proved that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, and not of a graceless covenant, the axe will be laid to the root of the tree. Attend, therefore, to the subject with the utmost impartiality, that you may obtain, not only light in your head, but also reap saving advantage to your soul. I have known some Christless sinners, by the means of this controversy, awakened to a greater concern about their eternal salvation than ever they were before. And, be assured, sir, that the truths of the gospel, if they are not unto your own soul a savor of life unto life, will be a savor of death unto death. Eternity, an endless eternity lies before you. You have slept secure in sin long enough; it is high time you should awake. Every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay to awake, and turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly! That salvation may thus come to you and to your household, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ.

My dear sir, farewell.

DIALOGUE IV.

A REPLY TO THE PARISHIONER'S LETTER, CONCERNING QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNION, PRINTED AT NEW HAVEN.

Parishioner. Sir, three times I have been with you heretofore, to get my child baptized; and I am now come to make you a fourth visit, with the letter lately printed at New Haven in my hand.

Minister. I am willing, sir, and ever have been, to oblige you in all things wherein I lawfully may; and particularly, I

am willing to baptize your child, if you really, understanding the true import of the action, are willing to offer your child in baptism; even to dedicate it to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; in whose name it is to be baptized. But, if you do indeed love God so well, as that you are willing to give him your child, to be his forever, why are you not as willing to give him yourself? And why should you not, first of all, give yourself up to God through Jesus Christ; and then, after that, give your child to him? In this way, God will become your covenant God and Father in this world, and your eternal portion in the next. This is all I wait for; and this is what I have, from the beginning, been urging upon you, as your immediate, indispensable duty. You remember what I said to you in your first visit, "If you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him; you may have your choice; you may do as you like: come, for all things are now ready. And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing, therefore, can hinder the baptism of your child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant." And you remember my parting words in your last visit, "Every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay, to awake, and to turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long, to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly!" And you are my witness, that at all times I am ready to instruct you, to pray for you, and if need be, to rebuke you with all tenderness and kindness.

P. Inspired by the spirit which runs through the New Haven letter, I must say, that I despise your rebukes, and do not desire your prayers. "Could I sufficiently dissemble, I should give you joy, and gain a speedy, easy admittance into your church;" but, for my part, I look upon you as little or nothing better than the very worst of heretics; for "your principles, sir, are too near of kin to those most shocking principles lately broached in the land, by several who have a fondness for being authors; particularly by Mr. Sandeman, and Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Sandeman says, that faith is obtained, as the most remarkable discoveries have been obtained, the use of the magnet, Jesuit's bark, and many chemical discoveries; that is, not when

these things, but something else, was looked for. Mr. Hopkins says, it is indeed as great an absurdity as can be thought of, to suppose that the corrupt, vicious heart does any thing towards becoming holy, etc., for all the exercises and volitions of the corrupt, unregenerate heart are certainly the exercises of sin."

"These principles, sir, I look upon of the most dangerous tendency of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, Deism itself not excepted."

M. My dear sir, be cool, and think a minute or two who you are, and what you say, and what you have been doing. You are my parishioner. In this character you have made me three visits before this. In this character you are now talking with me. You knew my principles before you ever desired me to baptize your child; and you knew that the church under my care profess to be in the same scheme of religion with me. And would you desire that your child should be baptized by the worst of heretics! Or would you desire to join with such a church! Where is the honesty or consistency of your conduct! You are inspired with a spirit, indeed; but I fear you know not what spirit you are of.

As to our sentiments touching total depravity, works done by unregenerate men, and the sovereignty of divine grace in the conversion of sinners, we profess to agree with the Assembly of divines at Westminster; and you know, that their confession of faith, and larger and shorter catechisms are adopted by the church of Scotland, as their test of orthodoxy; and are much the same with the Savoy confession of faith, which is adopted, in general, by the churches in Massachusetts and in Connecticut. But these public formulas declare, as to total depravity, that "we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." And as to works done by unregenerate men, that "although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God." And, as to the divine sovereignty in the conversion of sinners, they say, that "all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time effectually to call," etc. "This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether

passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call," etc.

And the famous Mr. Stoddard, in his Treatise concerning the Nature of Conversion, says, "If men do not act from gracious motives, and for gracious ends, they do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what they do; they do not attend the will of God." And, "There is an opposition between saving grace and common grace: common graces are lusts, and do oppose saving grace. Making his own salvation his end, is contrary to making the glory of God his last end: hating sin, not because it wrongs God, but because it exposes him, is resisting the command of God: bringing every thing into subserviency to his own ends, is opposite to the bringing every thing into a subserviency to God's glory. The man that hath but common grace, goeth quite in another path than that which God directs unto: when he goeth about to establish his own righteousness, he sets himself against that way of salvation which God prescribes. (Rom. x. 3.) There is an enmity in the ways of such men as have but common grace, to the ways that godly men take." Thus Mr. Stoddard.

And now, my parishioner, I appeal to you, to judge whether these quotations, out of the confession of faith and Mr. Stoddard, "are not as near of kin to those shocking principles, which you look upon of the most dangerous tendency of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, Deism itself not excepted," as any thing I ever advanced from the pulpit or the press.

And if some of the important doctrines of Christianity are more obnoxious to you than Deism itself, — that is, if you are nearer a Deist than you are a Christian, — certainly you are not fit to be a church member, or to offer your child in baptism, or to partake of the Lord's supper, according to your own principles; for you say, that men must be orthodox. And you cannot deny, that the church of Scotland, and the churches in New England, have as good a right to judge for themselves what principles are agreeable to the word of God, and of importance to be professed, as you have to judge for yourself. We are willing, that those who look upon the doctrines contained in our public formulas as being worse than Deism, should hold communion among themselves; but we think it an inconsistency in them to desire to be members of our churches.

P. "Unholy obedience is a contradiction in terms; for holiness and obedience are the same thing."

M. In saying this, you condemn Mr. Mather's scheme of

an external, graceless covenant, by wholesale. However, strictly speaking, what you say is true. And in this view Mr. Stoddard's words are exactly right, (speaking of the unregenerate:) "There is no obedience to God in what they do." And thus it is said by the church of England, in her thirty-nine articles, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God. Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath commanded and willed them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin." (See article 13.) Do you, sir, believe this?

P. No; far from it. Rather I believe, that "all the obedience of an unconverted man is holy obedience." Yea, I believe, that "the obedience of an unrenewed man, so far forth as it is obedience, is as holy as any that a gracious man can yield. Though it is but a partial and imperfect obedience, yet just so much as there is of obedience, just so much holiness. And, "A measure of strength is given him by God, to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands, seeking his glory." And, in any other view, I must acknowledge that the unconverted covenanter would be "perjured." For to swear to obey a covenant which we cannot obey, is perjury. And therefore, had the unconverted no power to yield a holy obedience, it would be perjury in them to enter into covenant engagements to do it.

M. If I understand you right, and you are in earnest in this declaration, then you believe that the unconverted are, in a measure, really holy, and therefore are not totally depraved, as is asserted in the confession of faith adopted by our churches. And if this be so, then you are not sound in the faith. And those who are not sound in the faith, have no right to church privileges, according to your own principles. You, therefore, cannot consistently claim church privileges of any of our churches; indeed, you may think our confession of faith not agreeable to the word of God, and you may think the same of the articles of the church of England. If, therefore, you would act a consistent part, you should join neither with us nor them; but rather form a new church, on a new plan, with those who think as you do; for it is absurd for those who differ in essentials to walk together as brethren. And to profess our belief in articles of religion which we do not believe, for the sake of church privileges, is as gross dissimulation in the laity among us, as it is in the clergy in England, who subscribe the thirty-nine articles of that church, in order to enjoy a benefice, when they do not believe them, as is the case with the Arians, Socinians, and Arminians, among

them. In a word, if you really disbelieve the doctrines of total depravity, and of divine sovereignty, you can by no means consistently join with us.

P. "These principles deny the present state of the unregenerate to be a state of probation: they deny him to be a moral agent: they deny the justice of punishment for any sin."

M. So says Dr. Taylor, so says Dr. Whitby, so says Dr. Stebbins, and all other Pelagian and Arminian writers I ever read. They all agree, that the doctrines of total depravity and of divine sovereignty, as held by the Calvinists, are absolutely inconsistent with moral agency. They have said it a thousand times, and they have been answered as often. Thus stands the controversy. "Because I have no heart to love God, therefore I cannot be bound in duty to love him." "Because I am dead in sin, and opposite to all good, therefore that law which says, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things,' cannot justly reach me." "Because we all, with one consent, excuse ourselves from coming to the gospel feast, therefore we are not in a state of probation." "Because God says, 'May I not do what I will with my own?' therefore we may say, we are not in duty bound to regard his law, or hearken to his gospel" — reasoning which, if it has weight in it, proves the fundamental maxims of the Bible to be false; for that book teaches, that we may be dead in sin, and yet deserve to be damned for that sin; that God is not obliged in justice, or by promise, to grant converting grace to any impenitent sinner; and yet it is the duty of such sinners every where to repent. But you may, at your leisure, see my sentiments on these subjects at large, and my confutation of Mr. Sandeman's scheme of religion, both at once, in a book lately printed at Boston, entitled An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel.

However, I will readily grant, that there is an absolute necessity of denying total depravity on the one hand, or of giving up the covenant of grace, and substituting a graceless covenant in its room, on the other hand, in order to open a door for the unconverted, as such, to enter into covenant with God, and join in full communion with the church, consistently with truth and honesty. But yet so it happens, that on either plan men cannot consistently be admitted into our churches. For if they deny total depravity, they must be deemed not sound in the faith, according to our approved standard; and therefore must not be admitted. And if they substitute a graceless covenant in the room of the covenant of grace, they go off from the plan on which our churches were originally

founded; and so, consistently, cannot be members of them. We must have a new confession of faith, and a new plan of church order, and form new churches, before either of these ways will answer the end. Besides, if the unconverted have a degree of real holiness, and do, though in an imperfect manner, yet really comply with the covenant of grace, then the unconverted are, in fact, entitled not only to the seals, but also to all the blessings of the covenant of grace; even to pardon, justification, and eternal life; than which nothing can be more contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, which every where declares all such to be under the wrath of God and curse of the law, condemned already, liable to be struck dead and sent to hell at any moment. (John iii. 18, 36. Gal. iii. 10.)

P. The unconverted Israelites made a profession of the very covenant you plead for; and why cannot we?

M. You can, if you will do as they did, namely, "flatter him with your mouth, and lie unto him with your tongues." But then you ought not to take it ill if the true nature of your conduct is, from the word of God, set in a clear light before you.

P. But I do take it ill; indeed I do. Particularly the rebuke you gave me for dissimulation, in my last visit, I do not take well at your hands; for I am not the guilty man.

M. The man I rebuked for dissimulation was my parishioner, whose conversation with me was printed in the New Haven Dialogue; and who, in his first visit, told me, "that he did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he owned the covenant;" on which I let him know that he, for that very reason, had no right, by virtue of that profession, to claim the seal of the covenant of grace for his child; for this very same man afterwards came again to me to baptize that very same child, and put on a bold face, and declared, that "he had entered into that covenant," and therefore had a right to the seal of it.

P. "I shall not trouble myself to defend this parishioner against the charge of dissimulation." But I am not the same man.

M. If you are not the same man, why do you take the charge of dissimulation to yourself now? Or why did you pretend to be the same man then? Why did you call yourself by the same name? And why did you begin with me in these words?—"Sir, I find the dialogue which passed between us the other day is printed." Is it not evident, by this, that you intended then, that I should consider you as the very same man? But no sooner do I find you contradicting yourself, and

rebuke you for it, but you cry out, "This dialogue did not pass between you and me." To use your own words, sir, "it is easy to see your unlucky mistake." And "it is really pleasant enough" to see you drove to a necessity of changing your name, in order to get rid of the fault, which otherwise you must, even in your own judgment, be reputed guilty of. We have heard of men's changing their names when pursued for their crimes, that they might avoid their pursuers; but did you before now ever hear of a parishioner that went to his minister to get his child baptized, that did so?

P. Be this as it may, the grand question is this, namely: "Can a man, who knows he has no grace, profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?" You say, he cannot; I say, he can. Indeed, once I was of your opinion; and this was the reason I did not join in full communion; but I am of another mind now. And I can, though I know I have no grace, yet make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, as honestly as any man; and to charge any one with wilful lying for this, is virtually to charge the ministers and churches through the land with that horrid crime.

M. As this is a matter of importance, it deserves to be thought of seriously, and to be thoroughly looked into; and if you will be serious only long enough to understand the proposition, you will be forced to believe it.

By the covenant of grace, we mean that covenant which promises pardon and eternal life to those who comply with it. By a compliance with it, we mean saving grace; that is, such gracious exercises as are infallibly connected with salvation; such as repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, which imply supreme love to God and Christ in their very nature, and a cordial disposition to a life of sincere obedience to all God's commands.* By one who has no grace, we mean one who is entirely destitute of this repentance, faith, love, and new obedience, which are connected with eternal life; being dead in sin.

When, therefore, it is said, that "a man, who knows that he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying," the truth of the proposition is as

* A saving compliance with the covenant of grace is what does not, in the least degree, take place in the unregenerate, but does actually take place in all true believers. For although it implies saving grace, yet it does not imply perfect holiness. Those, therefore, who are true believers, may make a profession honestly; but those who are not, cannot. To say that a true believer cannot make a profession honestly, because he is not perfectly holy, supposes that a saving compliance with the covenant of grace implies perfect holiness; which is not true, as is granted on all hands.

evident, as when it is said, that "a man who knows that two and two are but four, cannot say, that two and two are five, without wilful lying." And, therefore, as soon as the proposition is understood, it cannot but be believed. There is no way to avoid it. For, —

1. If you explain down the covenant of grace into a graceless covenant, with which a graceless heart may really comply, it will not help your cause in the least; for if a graceless heart may comply with this graceless covenant, yet it still remains a self-evident truth, that a graceless heart doth not comply with the covenant of grace. Or, —

2. If you represent an unconverted, graceless man, as not being dead in sin, and without strength; but as really having a degree of spiritual life, and spiritual strength, and spiritual ability to yield holy obedience to all God's commands; and so as complying with the covenant of grace, in reality, though but in an imperfect degree, — it will not help your cause at all; for this graceless man, so called, is in fact a gracious man, and is entitled not only to the seals, but also to the blessings of the covenant of grace; because he does, in fact, comply with it. Rather it runs you into the absurdity of saying that some unconverted, graceless sinners are real converts and true saints, and have a title to eternal life; that is, of expressly contradicting yourself. Or, —

3. If you say, "A graceless sinner may comply with the covenant of grace, with moral sincerity, though not with gracious sincerity," it will not help your cause. For there is but one kind of real complying with the covenant of grace; and this entitles to eternal life; for he that really complies with the covenant of grace, doth, in so doing, act graciously. Thus he who loves God supremely, with moral sincerity, does love God supremely, in reality; but this real supreme love to God is a gracious and holy love to God. And you have already said, that "obedience to God is always holy," "and the obedience of the unrenewed, as holy as any that a gracious man can yield." But if so, then this obedience is performed with gracious sincerity, as really as the obedience of any gracious man is. But, if your graceless man does comply with the covenant of grace, in a gracious manner, he will go to heaven along with true saints; and therefore that saying of our blessed Savior is not true — "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It remains, therefore, that this proposition must pass for a self-evident truth, which cannot but be believed, as soon as it is understood, namely, "A man who knows he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without

wilful lying." You may as well say, that black is white, or that a dead man is alive, or that a graceless sinner is a real saint, as say, that "a man, who knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience," and therefore a man must either not know what he is about, or his conscience must be very much seared, or he will not dare to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace while he knows he has no grace; indeed, it is a full proof that a man is, to a great degree, destitute of moral honesty, if, with his eyes open, he dare to make such a profession. It is at least as gross wickedness as that which Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of, in saying, This is all the money, when they knew that it was not all. They lied to the Holy Ghost; and this man flatters God with his mouth, and lies unto him with his tongue. (Ps. lxxviii. 36.)

To be consistent, therefore, we must vote the covenant of grace out, in our church, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, or you cannot be admitted as a member. And if we should vote out the covenant of grace, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, we should, so far as this vote should have influence, cease to be a visible church of Christ. Nor should we have a visible right to baptism and the Lord's supper, which are seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other covenant; for there are but two covenants which now take place between God and man, namely, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. (Rom. iii. 27.)

P. I am not able to think of this seriously, and to answer it honestly; I have no other way, therefore, to get rid of the truth, but to misrepresent and ridicule it. However, I have two objections against this scheme, namely, 1. The church cannot know who do really comply with the covenant of grace; nor, 2. Can any join with the church but those who have full assurance.*

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* *Objection.* Baptism alone makes me a church member, or it does not. If it does, then I have a right to the Lord's table; if it does not, then the church have no right to discipline me.

Answer. If baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, then all baptized persons in Christendom, young and old, good and bad, the excommunicated not excepted, have an equal right; which none will grant. And if the church have no right to discipline any but those who have a right to come to the Lord's table, then they have no right to discipline any who are guilty of heresy or scandal; for such have no right to come to the Lord's table. The objection is founded on two propositions, both of which are false, even in the judgment of the objector, namely: 1. That baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, without any other qualification whatsoever; upon which rule, even the excommunicated cannot be debarred. 2. That the church have no authority to exercise discipline over any but those who have a right to the Lord's table; upon which rule, those who are disqualified for the Lord's table, by heresy or scandal, are not subjects of discipline.

M. You may find a full answer to these objections in what I have already published on this subject, which you appear not to have attended to. But pray, what rule would you have the church proceed by in the admission of members? Would you have certain evidence, that the candidates for admission have the requisite qualifications insisted on by the church?

P. Yes, indeed. For, "this is my principle—that every man asking special ordinances is as *certainly* qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe, unless there is *certain evidence* that he is disqualified."

M. But one, who is at heart a Deist, and who lives secretly in adultery, may, to answer political ends, "ask for special ordinances," and there may be no "certain evidence" of his crimes. Therefore, according to this new divinity, this infidel, this adulterer, is as certainly qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe.

P. Shocking consequence! However, this I lay down for an infallible truth, that all who have visibly entered into covenant, as I have done, "to walk in all God's ways, and to keep all his commands," are bound by their own vow to attend special ordinances."

M. What! bound, though they know themselves to be unqualified? Is the above-mentioned infidel and adulterer bound? What! bound in the sight of God, and a well-regulated conscience, to come to the Lord's table, as he is? Pray, who bound him? God never did; nor does the vow he publicly made to "walk in all God's ways, and keep all his commands," bind him to come as he is; for this is what God never commanded.

And it is equally evident, that God never commanded men to make a lying profession in any instance, either verbally or practically. But to seal a covenant is, practically, to profess a compliance with it. To seal a covenant, therefore, with which we know we do not comply, is what God never commanded; yea, it is what God has forbidden in every text in the Bible which forbids lying. So that, if the covenant to be sealed in baptism and the Lord's supper, is the covenant of grace, as you allow it is, then those who know they have no grace, are forbidden to seal it, by every text in the Bible which forbids lying; and therefore that command, "Do this in remembrance of me," is, beyond all doubt, a command which respects believers, and them only; agreeable to the publicly professed belief of the church of Scotland, and the churches in New England, held forth in their public formulas. Indeed, it is the duty, the indispensable duty, of every one to whom the gospel comes, and

their highest interest, to comply with the covenant of grace, and that on the very first invitation. As soon as the glad tidings come to our ears, "Come, for all things are now ready; whosoever will, let him come;" we ought not to delay a moment, we ought not to make one excuse, we ought not to feel the least reluctance; no, rather, on the contrary, we ought, with Peter's hearers, to receive the word gladly, that same day, and to make a public profession and join with the church the first opportunity. (Matt. xiii. 44.) And to neglect this is a sin so great and aggravated, as to expose the neglecters to be given up to God in this world, (Luke xiv. 24,) and to be cast off forever in the world to come. (Mark xvi. 16.) So that your mouth is stopped, and you stand guilty before God. But, to return to a consideration of your visible standing. Pray, sir, were you esteemed a church member, in full communion, in the town where you lived before you moved into this parish?

P. No, sir, by nobody. I never looked upon myself to be a church member, in this sense of the phrase. I never meant to join with the church, nor did the minister or the church mean to receive me as a church member; and accordingly, I never met with the church when they had church meetings upon church business. I never staid when the church was desired to stay, as they sometimes were, after worship on Sabbaths, and at other times. I never voted when the church were called to give in their vote in any matter whatsoever. Nor had I any right to go to the Lord's table without making a public profession over again, and thereby *joining with the church*, as the common phrase was. No such thing was allowed where I was brought up. So that I did not think myself a church member before I moved into this parish, nor was I esteemed and used as a church member; yea, it never entered into my heart, to pretend any such thing, till my New London patron taught me to say so, and to put in these high claims, and to deny my old principles, and contradict myself, and finally, even to deny my own name, and pretend to be another man. And since then I have felt "*bravely*," and have looked down upon you with great contempt.

M. The more men mock God in religion, the more proud, haughty, and insolent, are they apt to be towards their fellowmen. A religion begun in ignorance like yours, and carried on and perfected in this shocking manner, if it may do to live with, yet will not do to die by.

P. Be this as it may, yet to say, as you do, "Better do nothing than lie," tends to increase the number of prayerless

persons, and prayerless families, to put an end to all means, and in the end to overthrow all religion.

M. Doth not God himself say, (Eccl. v. 5,) "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay"; that is, in other words, "Better do nothing than lie." And will you condemn the Holy One of Israel? Either give up the Bible, or abide by its sacred maxims. Besides, there is a difference between *covenanting transactions* and *common means;* and accordingly, Christ ordered his ministers to "preach the gospel to every creature;" but he did not order them to baptize every creature.

For graceless sinners may hear the gospel preached, may hear all the truths and duties of it explained, proved, and urged, and may attend, yea, may be very attentive, and meditate on them day and night, till they are pricked at the heart; they may forsake vain and vicious company, become sober, serious, deeply distressed about their eternal welfare; they may spend much time in secret prayer, and an awakened sinner cannot fail to do it, and frequently spend whole days in fasting and prayer, as Mr. Brainerd used to do, under his terrors, when he was unconverted; (pray read his life;) I say, graceless sinners may do all this, without making any profession of godliness. Yea, they may do all this, and yet in all profess that they have no grace, no love to God in their hearts, but are dead in sin.

You insinuate, that the doctrines which I preached tend to licentiousness. I appeal to facts. Look from the reformation down to this day; look through England, Scotland, and Ireland; look through the British colonies in America, and through our West India Islands; and put the question: When and where, and among whom, has there been, or is there now, the greatest strictness maintained, and the most constant, diligent, and painful attendance on means? Either among Calvinists, who heartily agree with the Westminster confession of faith and catechisms, and where these doctrines are taught privately, and preached publicly; or among Pelagians, Arminians, and Semi-Arminians, who are constantly teaching and preaching in another strain? While the Assembly of divines sat at Westminster, composing the formulas, which I am now vindicating, London, that great city, was full of sermons, and prayers, and strictness; but since these doctrines have been laid aside, and contrary doctrines introduced, they are become very licentious and debauched. The more you flatter the sinner, the farther will he run from God and all good. But tell him the truth, pierce him to the heart, and he will begin to cry, "What shall I do to be saved?"

P. But can an unconverted sinner say the Lord's prayer, and speak true? that is, can he profess to God, that he hath all those holy and pious affections in his heart, which our Savior designed those words to express?

M. I also will ask you one question; answer me; and then I will answer you. Is not the man who thus says the Lord's prayer entitled to pardon and eternal life?

P. No doubt he is. For our Savior says, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you," with a design to explain in what sense he meant that petition should be made, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." And besides, in the same sermon, he expressly declares, that every one that asketh receiveth.

M. It therefore follows, that no unconverted man ever said that prayer, in that sense, unless you will own, what seems to be a necessary consequence of the scheme you are pleading for, that some unconverted men are entitled to pardon and eternal life; which is so contrary to the most plain and express declarations of Scripture, (John iii. 18, 36. Gal. iii. 10,) that, as yet, you have not ventured to own it.

Thousands, no doubt, have, after a sort, said the Lord's prayer, who have fallen short of eternal life. For the Papists say the Lord's prayer oftener than Protestants do, ten to one, and for every Pater-Noster they count a bead. And while sinners are secure in sin, such kind of praying, — that is, using words without any meaning, — will quiet their consciences; for they now think they have done their duty. "For without the law, sin was dead;" and so, "I was alive without the law once." But no sooner do they fall under deep convictions, but that they find something else to do. Pray read Mr. Brainerd's Life, and there you may see how an awakened sinner feels, and how he prays.

P. Thus far, sir, I have acted the part of a disputant. I have passed over nothing in the New Haven letter that is new and to the purpose; for this letter-writer has not said one word for my old beloved scheme, the half-way. Now, therefore, I beg leave to assume the friendly, honest character which I sustained in my first visit; for, let others do as they will, I am resolved to be an honest man. Wherefore, to sum up the whole, —

1. I believe, that there is but one covenant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals; and that he that is qualified to offer his children in baptism, is equally qualified for the Lord's table; and, therefore, that the half-way practice is not according to Scripture.

2. I believe, that any man, who seals any covenant, doth, in and by the act of sealing, declare his compliance with that covenant which he seals; because this is the import of the act of sealing.

3. I believe, that it is of the nature of lying, to seal a covenant with which I do not now, and never did, comply in my heart; but rather habitually and constantly reject. Therefore,

4. I believe, that a man who knows he has no grace, cannot seal the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience.

5. I believe, that the only point which needs to be settled, in order to settle the whole controversy, is this, namely: Are baptism and the Lord's supper seals of the covenant of grace, or of a graceless covenant?

6. I believe, that there are but two covenants between God and man, called, in Scripture language, "the law of works," and "the law of faith," but commonly called "the covenant of works," and "the covenant of grace;" and that the doctrine of an external covenant, distinct from the covenant of grace, is not from heaven, but of men. Thus, sir, you have my creed.

M. Sir, I hope the time will soon come, when you and all my other parishioners, through the country, will well understand the controversy, and be able to judge for yourselves what is truth and what is not so. In the mean time, remember, my friend, that he that knoweth his master's will and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. Behold, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation; therefore to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. Every moment in which you continue practically to renounce your baptism, by rejecting Christ Jesus and his gospel, you hang over hell, ready to sink, under the curse of the divine law, into eternal burnings; for he that believeth not is condemned already. Wherefore repent and believe the gospel.

Some seem to think that baptism alone makes a man a Christian, and brings him really into the covenant of grace, so as that he is no longer under the covenant of works, as the unbaptized are. But the apostle Paul did not think so. For he, speaking to the baptized Galatians, among whom he feared there were some who were self-righteous, Christless sinners, says, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." "As many," be they circumcised, and baptized too, "as are of the works of the law," as depend on their own works for justification in the sight of God, "are under the curse;" even they are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is every one," etc. But if baptism delivers men from the cove-

nant of works, they cannot any one of them be under its curse. For no man is liable to the curse of a law which he is not under. Besides, in this apostle's view of things, it was peculiar to true believers to be really in the covenant of grace, and not under the law as a covenant of works. (Rom. vi. 14.) "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace." For, according to this scheme of religion, every soul is either married to the law, and these bring forth fruit unto death; or married to Christ, and these bring forth fruit unto God. Wherefore, know assuredly, that your baptism, although it increases your obligations, and so enchances your guilt, yet it alone gives you not the least right to any one of the peculiar blessings of the covenant of grace, so as at all to exempt you from the curse of the law; but you are now, this moment, in fact, as liable to be struck dead and sent to hell, by the divine justice, as any unbaptized sinner in the land. And should you die in the state you are now in, you would most certainly be damned along with the unbaptized heathen; only your hell would be hotter than theirs. Matt. xi. 20—24. For if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. (Rom. ii. 25.)

Wherefore I advise you,—

First of all, immediately to repent of your sins, and return to God through Jesus Christ, looking only to free grace through him for pardon and eternal life. For I testify unto you, that if you trust in your baptism to recommend you to God, Christ shall profit you nothing. (Gal. v. 2.) Wherefore give up this, and all your other self-righteous claims, and apply to the mere, pure free grace of God, through Jesus Christ, as all your hope. For, as to acceptance with God, there is no difference between the circumcised Jew and the uncircumcised Greek, or between the baptized nominal Christian and an unbaptized Indian. (Rom. iii. 22.) If you will thus repent and believe the gospel, and in this way, not in falsehood, but in truth, "avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your sovereign Lord and supreme good, through Jesus Christ," you shall, in fact, have your choice; that is, have God for your God and portion in time and eternity. This, my dear Parishioner, this is the way to take upon you your baptismal covenant, and to get delivered from the curse of the covenant of works, and to enter into the covenant of grace, in reality and in truth. This, therefore, do without delay. And having done this, then make a public profession of religion, and join yourself to God's people, and bring your dear child and dedicate it to the same God to whom you have dedicated yourself. And let it be the business of your life to bring up that,

and your other children, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And now, as you travel through the country, — for I understand you are become a great traveller, and gain admittance into all companies, and among men of all denominations and character, — I advise you to use your utmost influence to diffuse a friendly spirit every where, among all your acquaintance, in this controversy. Particularly, urge it upon parishioners of your acquaintance, to treat their ministers in a respectful manner, while they apply to them for light and instruction, or when they undertake to dispute these points with them; especially, wherever your influence extends, let no man on our side of the question, treat his minister ill because he is in the opposite scheme. It is not manly, it is not Christian-like, it is not prudent, to do it. For there is no way to promote truth so effectually, as to hold forth light in love; and to treat your opponents in a kind and friendly manner. For my part, I have a high esteem for many in the ministry, who differ, in their practice in the admission of persons to sealing ordinances for themselves and for their children, from what I think is right. For it is a controversy which has not been attended to, nor is it an easy thing, at once, to get rid of the prejudices of education, and in the face of a frowning world to espouse the true Scripture plan. I have great hopes, however, that ere long we shall think and act nearer alike, when there has been sufficient time to understand one another, to weigh and deliberate, to get rid of the prejudices of education, etc. In the mean time, I most earnestly desire, that the controversy may be carried on, in the most open, fair, honest, cool, calm, friendly manner possible.

Who this letter-writer is, is not known by the public, as he has secreted his name. And whether it was with design, or through inadvertence, that he hath given up the doctrine of total depravity, as held forth in Scripture and in our public formulas, I shall not determine. Perhaps, on second thoughts, he will retract every thing he hath said, which hath that aspect. I wish he may. But if it should come to pass, as I fear it will, that in the course of this controversy, numbers should openly fall off to the Arminian scheme, in order to defend their lax manner of admission to sealing ordinances, I advise you, to keep by you, and to spread every where among your acquaintance, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and larger and shorter Catechisms; a book which will be of exellent service to teach people sound doctrine, and to guard them against Arminian errors.

To conclude, I shall always retain a most grateful sense of

your kind treatment of your minister, *when acting yourself*, and be always ready to do every kind office in my power, which either you, or any other of my parishioners, shall need at my hands. I esteem it among the great blessings of my life, that I live in a parish, and among a people, so well disposed to treat a minister with that respect which is due to his office. And I hope you may never find me wanting in any instance of kind and friendly conduct towards you. I wish you the best of Heaven's blessings. — My dear Parishioner, adieu.

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